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Glory, diversity, batting talents

THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 25 March 1998 45p (IR£50p) No 3,567

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Party leaders unite to condemn racism in Britain

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

PARTY leaders last night united in an attack on the scourge of racism after *The Independent* urged them to join forces with Tony Blair to celebrate the multi-culturalism of Britain.

Their unity is a direct response to deep-seated concerns over racism and underlines a growing determination to tackle it head-on.

Government worries over racism surfaced twice last week: once in

Prime Minister's Question Time; and again when Mr Blair went to Southwark, south London, for a community meeting.

On both occasions, Mr Blair said the fundamental principle of racial equality was shared by every single mainstream party, that their unity is a direct response to deep-seated concerns over racism and underlines a growing determination to tackle it head-on.

But *The Independent* believes that racism is endemic, and that it cannot be answered by silence — it needs to be confronted, like Liverpool.

which is why *The Independent* has asked party leaders to speak out.

The first day of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence was told by Michael Mansfield QC, counsel for the Lawrence family, that racism and a desire to protect local white youths meant the police investigation was flawed from the moment Stephen was stabbed at a south London bus stop in 1993.

On the ground evidence of racism is strong, even in cities believed to be well-integrated, like Liverpool.

In a speech to Asian business leaders in London tonight, the Prime Minister will say that much has been done to stamp out racism, but more is needed.

Delivering a powerful statement of faith in Southwark last week, he said: "The single most important thing we can do is to make an absolutely clear statement of behalf of the Government, on behalf of all political parties, on behalf of society, that we believe in, and actually welcome a multi-racial and multi-cul-

tural society: that it's a good thing; that it's not something to be frightened of; that it's a healthy, life-giving thing; that it's actually the type of society we want to bring our children up in."

William Hague said last night: "I warmly welcome *The Independent*'s campaign to promote good race relations. The United Kingdom has set an example in the rest of the world in improving race relations, but we should never be complacent."

"More needs to be done to bring

down the barriers of ignorance and distrust which still exist in parts of our society. Good race relations depend on tough but fair immigration policy and firm action to eradicate the scourge of racism."

Paddy Ashdown said: "Racism is an evil which undermines the very fabric of society. As a nation we have come a long way in recent years in tackling intolerance and bigotry, but there is still much to do and we must not allow ourselves to become complacent. Britain draws strength

from diversity. The enormous variety of people of different cultures, religions and races who make up our society make Britain a wonderfully exciting, vibrant and cosmopolitan place to live."

Dafydd Wigley, the Plaid Cymru leader, said: "We abhor racism in all its various guises and will work with others from all democratic political parties, in Wales and throughout the UK, to defeat it at all times."

Lawrence blunders, page 10

Liverpool apartheid, page 10

Ports warned of Iraqi plot months ago

By Jason Bennett
Cofin Brown
and David Usborne

BRITISH intelligence has issued a series of warnings to ports and airports in the past few months about the dangers of Iraqi agents smuggling in a variety of biological and chemical weapons, it emerged yesterday.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, also disclosed that a warning that Saddam Hussein could be planning to flood the West with anthrax hidden bottles disguised as duty-free goods was received 13 days before the Government alerted the ports.

In a further development, an Iraqi scientist who may have tipped off Western intelligence agencies about the dangers of Iraqi agents smuggling in a variety of biological and chemical weapons was arrested yesterday.



Straw: all-ports alerts

that it was informed of the arrest of Nasir al-Hindawi by the Iraqi government earlier this month.

According to Baghdad, Mr Hindawi was found to be preparing his own flight from Iraq and had important documents about the binational weapons programme, which he intended handing over to western investigators.

Mr Hindawi is considered to have been one of the key pioneers of Iraq's biological campaign. Anthrax would have been one of the agents Hindawi would have been trying to put into production for Baghdad.

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A prayer for the dying: Gere meets Tibetan hunger-strikers



Actor Richard Gere meets one of six Tibetans who are taking part in a 'fast-unto-death' meant to pressure the United Nations into reopening its debate on the future of their country. Gere, a convert to Buddhism, is a strong supporter of Tibetan independence. Report, page 15

Photograph: Reuters

Labour deserts 'seedy' Blackpool for the soft life in chablis-on-sea

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour's old left has put up with a lot recently, but surely the brothers will never stand for this. The men from Millbank

have ended 70 years of tradition by dumping Blackpool from the annual conference circuit.

In a move which will enrage Labour as the party of Chablis and seafood rather than beer and battered cod, it

will meet on the south coast, hundreds of miles from its former heartland, ending a cherished tradition of infighting and politicking along the prom, accompanied by all the tacky

joys Blackpool has to offer. The party says the town is too expensive to get to, its wild roccoco Winter Gardens conference centre too cramped and its hotels too steady.

Fans of the resort will argue that its famously fierce landladies and over-the-top entertainment are part of the package. But now Labour's National Executive Committee has decided that after one last, long-booked trip in the North this autumn, the gathering will be held in Bournemouth next year, followed by two years running in Brighton.

A party spokesman said the decision was taken with "great reluctance" and he hoped delegates would return in Blackpool once its problems had been solved. The conference was first held there in 1927, and the party has returned every second year since 1976.

"One factor was the quality of the hall itself. We felt there was a lack of space at Blackpool. It also costs more to go to Blackpool for transport and staffing. There was also some concern at the quality of the hotels and rates that the hotels charge," the spokesman said.

Predictably, Dennis Skinner, the left-wing Labour MP for Bolsover, voted against the move.

THE NEW ASTRA VAUXHALL

"The new model's a better!"

THE SUN

Ex-boyfriend named as killer in civil case

By Kate Watson-Smyth

The former boyfriend of the murdered doctor Joan Francisco was yesterday named as her killer in a unique High Court action. Her family alleged that Tony Diedrick stalked the 27-year-old gynaecologist for months out of a "violent and perverted obsession" before strangling her with a vacuum cleaner cord at her flat in St John's Wood, London, on Boxing Day 1994.

Diedrick, 38, was arrested in March 1995 but released with no charge. The Crown Prosecution Service later decided there was not enough evidence to prosecute.

Yesterday there were gasps from Dr Francisco's mother, Venus, and sisters Celia and Margrette as Mr Justice Alliot said he had found for the family. Diedrick, from Maida Hill, west London, was out in court and did not give evidence during the case.

It is thought to be the first civil action against someone when there has been no criminal prosecution connected to a murder. The family are seeking £50,000 compensation for al-

leged assault and battery. The damages will be decided at a private hearing later.

Margrette Francisco said the CPS would be "strongly urged" to charge Diedrick. The family's solicitor, Taz Raza, said that if the it did not act and bring charges, a judicial review to challenge that decision would be sought in the High Court.

Mr Justice Alliot said the family had established certain facts, including that Diedrick was obsessed by Dr Francisco and stalked her home. He was desperate to speak to her, as he believed she was about to leave

for the US for good or for a long time and that he had demonstrated violence in the past when faced with a comparable situation. Diedrick had an alibi for the relevant period 8.50am to 9.40am on the day of the murder. "I consider that those factors make out a very strong *prima facie* case. Therefore I have no hesitation in drawing an adverse inference from the defendant's failure to give evidence."

"If the defendant did not kill the deceased, I deem it incredible he would not seize the opportunity to declare his innocence rather than shelter behind a perceived tactical advantage." Mr Justice Alliot said Diedrick probably had no premeditated intent to kill when he entered the flat. "But I am satisfied he first struck and then strangled the deceased by hand and ligature. This is a dreadful judgement to have to pass on any man ... but I find the assault and battery alleged, in effect the murder, to have been proved."

Margrette Francisco, speaking for the family, said: "It has been a very long and difficult struggle, fraught with many ob-

stacles ... We feel the road to justice has finally been opened to us." The Metropolitan Police said they were considering the outcome and whether the verdict had any implications for the police investigation. Solicitors for Diedrick, who also offered to pay the costs of the case, said they would appeal.

Fatal attraction, page 7

Stormont parties mired in detail

By David McKitterick

Ireland Correspondent

THE multi-party talks at Stormont yesterday became bogged down in incendiary details threatening the Government's hopes of a deal by agreement by the Easter deadline.

Ulster Unionist moves to resurrect the vexed issue of paramilitary arms de-commissioning, and to concentrate on the question of possible IRA involvement in recent violence, meant that the focus was on security rather than on political matters.

The delay has placed into deeper question the Government's ambition of finding agreement among the parties for a new political settlement before Good Friday - 10 April.

The Unionist party yesterday came close to accusing the authorities of covering up IRA involvement in recent bombings and shootings. Ken Maginnis MP declared: "We believe that there is a dissembling of the facts and we really have to get to the bottom of this."

Party members last night met the RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan to hear his security assessment. Party members earlier claimed that Mr Flanagan had told Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, that he believed the IRA was caged in recent violence. Ms Mowlam, however, has indicated that she has received no such information from Mr Flanagan.

Security sources say that recent republican violence has been mostly the work of the breakaway Continuity Army

Council. They add that Unionist politicians are wrong in their claims that the CAC operates with the consent of the IRA.

There have, however, been incidents in which at least some IRA members have been involved. A recent killing in Co Armagh is attributed by the authorities to "elements of the IRA", but they add that it is unclear whether the shooting was sanctioned by the IRA's leadership. There are further suspicions that recent mortar attack, carried out by the CAC, may have been aided by "disidents within the IRA".

The Unionist party's ambition appears to be to build a case against the IRA which would result in the expulsion of Sinn Fein from the talks process.

At the Unionist party's request, talks participants yesterday assembled for a pleasurable session which some sources described as tense. The party also appears to be in the business of demonstrating to its supporters that it is setting the agenda in the proceedings.

Earlier, the Irish foreign minister David Andrews sought to calm growing unease among the grassroots of his Fianna Fail party over proposed changes to the Republic's territorial claim over Northern Ireland.

He said he believed alterations to Articles Two and Three of the Republic's constitution would be accepted as part of a peace settlement in Northern Ireland. Mr Andrews added: "Articles Two and Three have enormous and deep meaning to my party... I think at the end of the day they will find an alternative amendment acceptable."

A serviceman helping to make the Scottish island of Gruinard safe from anthrax in 1986

Photograph: Sun newspaper

FBI tries to deport guerrilla to Iraq

By Patrick Cobbourn



First Iraqi agents tried to poison him with thallium, a slow acting rat poison. Then the Federal Bureau of Investigation put him in jail as a danger to the security of the United States and are trying to deport him back to Iraq, where he faces execution.

Safa al-Battat, 33, a veteran guerrilla leader against the army in the marshes of southern Iraq, now has unique and painful experience of the Iraqi and US security methods.

Cured of the results of taking thallium in a jar of yogurt at a party in Iraqi Kurdistan, he is in jail in California while ill-trained FBI agents try to understand his role in the complex politics of Iraq.

He is one of 600 members of the Iraqi opposition airlifted from Kurdistan by the CIA at

the end of 1996 to escape Iraqi tanks which had just rolled up to the Central Intelligence Agency's operation in northern Iraq, in the agency's worst defeat since the Bay of Pigs. Now Mr Battat is one of six Iraqis facing expulsion from the US and believed Mr Hawley be-

Iraq because the FBI decided he might be a double agent.

The court hearings are largely secret but *The Independent* has obtained a memorandum describing the three-day hearing against another Iraqi, Hashim Qadir Hawley, held for the same reason. It reveals that Jennifer Rettig, an FBI special agent who originally interviewed him, believed he was a member of a secret organisation called "KLM".

Mr Hawley, who had been a member of the Iraqi opposition for 30 years, was confused about why he was accused of belonging to a Dutch airline. Only after a military interpreter was called to the stand did it emerge that Ms Rettig, who had received a short briefing on Iraq, had heard the translator use the term "Kurdish liberation movement" and believed Mr Hawley be-

longed to a powerful organisation with the initials KLM. Expulsion orders on Mr Battat and five other Iraqis were handed down by the immigration court judge, who decided that the defendants could not be told the evidence against them. Their lawyers are still considering an appeal and have been joined by James Woolsey, the first director of the CIA under President Bill Clinton, who now works for a Washington law firm.

It is a strange fate for Mr Battat, who has spent a year in jail. In London, Ghaniyya Jawad, another long-time opponent of the Iraqi regime, says he is one of the finest of those who fought against the Iraqi regime. He blames the CIA for looking for scorpions and imaginary agents.

Mr Battat's record of activism against Saddam Hussein is difficult to match. Born in

Basra he deserted from the Iraqi army in 1991 in the wake of the uprisings in the south of Iraq for which President George Bush had called. He went briefly to Iran but then joined the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella group for opponents of the government in Baghdad, and set up a network in southern Iraq.

It was because he was important to the opposition that Iraqi security tried to poison him two years later. But on recovering after being treated in Britain, Mr Battat went back to Kurdistan, becoming one of the leaders of the resistance. When Iraqi tanks entered the area in August 1996 he fled again, this time to the US where FBI agents decided that he posed a danger to security, put him in jail and now propose to return him to Iraq.

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Recycled paper made up
41.4% of the raw material for
UK newspapers in the
first half of 1997.

MICHAEL HANLON WEATHER WISE

NICENESS is a hard quantity to measure when it comes to the weather. It is easy to quantify in terms of wind speed, temperature, pressure and so on, but is it possible to scientifically describe the weather in terms of human comfort?

Approximately speaking, yes. In 1963, the climatologist Victor Olgyay came up with the idea of a "comfort chart", plotting limits for various activities by "inhabitants of temperate climatic zones" in relation to temperature and humidity.

Interestingly, humidity turns out to be as important, if not more so, than temperature in defining comfort. On Olgyay's chart, the line marking the high-temperature boundary of an "impossible environment" runs from more than 50C

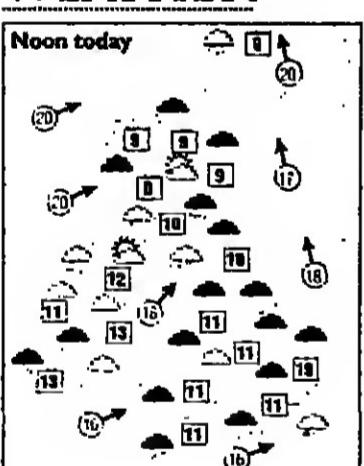
(122F) at 20 per cent humidity, to 33C (91F) when the humidity exceeds 90 per cent.

That is why dry desert heat is much more bearable than the stifling fog of an equatorial forest, even though the temperatures in the forest may be 20C below those in the desert. In both dry air, provided you keep out of the sun, "work of moderate intensity" is possible at more than 43C (109F). At 95+ per cent humidity, even 24C (75F) is enough to make anyone down tools in a torrent of sweat.

As the mercury plummets, humidity has less of an effect on comfort, though a combination of high moisture content and low temperatures can be harmful. Just how harmful was discovered in a disastrous experiment in the 1880s, when a tuberculosis sanatorium was constructed underground in Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

The idea was that the constant chill (10C) and high humidity in the cave would provide the ideal environment for the sickly patients. In fact, it turned out that the opposite is true - hot, dry air is required - and the patients all died.

WEATHER



British Isles weather

most recent available figure at noon local time
Country: Great Britain; Province: Northern Ireland; County: Ulster; Subdivision: Strabane, Omagh, Derry.

Location	Condition	Temp (°C)	Wind (mph)
Aberdeen	Cloudy	10.50	10
Angus	Cloudy	10.50	10
Ayr	Cloudy	9.48	10
Belfast	Cloudy	10.50	10
Birmingham	Cloudy	8.43	10
Bristol	Cloudy	8.43	10
Cardiff	Cloudy	8.43	10
Carmarthen	Cloudy	8.43	10
Dover	Cloudy	8.43	10
Dublin	Cloudy	8.43	10
Edinburgh	Cloudy	8.43	10
Exeter	Cloudy	11.52	10
Glasgow	Cloudy	8.43	10
Holyhead	Cloudy	8.43	10
Liverpool	Cloudy	8.43	10
London	Cloudy	8.43	10
Nottingham	Cloudy	8.43	10
Plymouth	Cloudy	8.43	10
Sheffield	Cloudy	8.43	10
Southampton	Cloudy	8.43	10
Swindon	Cloudy	8.43	10
Wales	Cloudy	8.43	10
Weymouth	Cloudy	8.43	10
Worcester	Cloudy	8.43	10
Worthing	Cloudy	8.43	10
Youghal	Cloudy	8.43	10

Most parts will see rain. In Scotland the steady and heavier rain will quickly clear east but western parts will then have drizzle with the east brightening and some sunshine appearing. Northern Ireland will be mostly cloudy with a little morning drizzle turning to heavy rain in the afternoon. Rain in Wales and England will clear eastwards with most parts having a drier but mostly cloudy afternoon, then the rain will hang on in south-east England and western coasts will see some drizzle.

Outlook for the next few days
Thursday will be cooler and breezy across the UK with a mixture of sunshine and blustery showers, the bulk of the showers in the north-west. Friday will see rain race eastwards across the UK, clearing in the north later to blustery showers and some sunshine. Saturday will become more settled after early rain clears southern parts with more in the way of sunshine and most parts becoming dry.

Outlook for today

London: Good
S. England: Good
W. England: Good
C. England: Good
Scotland: Good
N. Ireland: Good

High tides AM HT PM HT
London 11.29 6.4 23.54 6.5
Liverpool 08.48 8.5 21.20 8.7
Aberystwyth 04.33 11.8 17.04 12.2
Glasgow 03.55 7.7 15.02 7.9
Dun Laoghaire 10.21 3.1 22.35 3.0
Dunoon 03.11 3.7 21.48 3.9

Lightning-up times Sun moon
Birmingham 18.46 05.12 18.53
Bristol 18.29 05.57 18.22
Cardiff 18.31 04.50 04.32
Glasgow 18.30 05.56 18.30
London 18.31 05.56 18.30
Newcastle 18.29 05.54 March 22

Low tides Sun moon
Birmingham 18.53 05.12 18.22
Bristol 18.22 04.50 04.32
Cardiff 18.24 04.50 04.32
Glasgow 18.25 04.50 04.32
London 18.26 04.50 04.32
Newcastle 18.27 04.50 04.32

Height measured in metres

Sun moon
Birmingham 18.46 05.12 18.53
Bristol 18.29 05.57 18.22
Cardiff 18.31 04.50 04.32
Glasgow 18.30 05.56 18.30
London 18.31 05.56 18.30
Newcastle 18.29 05.54 March 22

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0838 461777 for the latest local and general traffic news. Source: AA Roadwatch. Call charged at 5p per minute. © AA 1997

INDEPENDENT Weatherline
For the latest forecasts dial 0891 50008 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Rates charged at 5p per min of all times (exc VAT)

High tides AM HT PM HT

London 11.29 6.4 23.54 6.5
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Newcastle 18.29 05.54 March 22

Height measured in metres

Sun moon

Low tides Sun moon
Birmingham 18.53 05.12 18.22
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Height measured in metres

Sun moon

Birmingham 18.46 05.12 18.53
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Glasgow 18.30 05.56 18.30
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Newcastle 18.29 05.54 March 22

Height measured in metres

Sun moon

Birmingham 18.22 04.50 04.32
Bristol 18.24 04.50 04.32
Cardiff 18.25 04.50 04.32
Glasgow 18.26 04.50 04.32
London 18.27 04.50 04.32
Newcastle 18.28 04.50 04.32

Height measured in metres

Sun moon

Birmingham 18.23 04.51 04.33
Bristol 18.25 04.51 04.33
Cardiff 18.26 04.51 04.33
Glasgow 18.27 04.51 04.33
London 18.28 04.51 04.33
Newcastle 18.29 04.51 04.33

Height measured in metres

Sun moon

Birmingham 18.24 04.52 04.34
Bristol 18.26 04.52 04.34
Cardiff 18.27 04.52 04.34
Glasgow 18

TOMORROW
 ■ Forged office - now you're in a flexible working zone
 ■ Examples: How to get a first class degree

Happy birthday
 Channels. Will there be another one?



CONTENT

Children's vaccine is safe, say experts

By Jeremy Lawrence
 Health Editor

A GROUP of 37 scientific experts has concluded that the combined MMR vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella is safe after reviewing all the evidence linking it with bowel disease and autism.

There was no evidence to indicate any link between the vaccine and the disorders and there was no reason to change the current policy of giving MMR vaccination to children in the second year of life, the experts agreed at a meeting organised by the Medical Research Council.

The MRC assembled the experts from across the country for the special closed meeting on Monday at the request of the Government's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman. Sir Kenneth asked for the meeting, whose findings were released yesterday, after research published last month in the *Lancet*, suggesting a possible link between the vaccine and the diseases, led to a sharp fall in mothers coming forward to have their children vaccinated.

The chief author of the *Lancet* paper, Dr Andrew Wakefield, of the Royal Free Hospital, attended the MRC meeting and presented the results from his published and unpublished research. Although the paper, signed by 12 co-authors, had said that no causal link between MMR vaccine and bowel disease and autism had been established, Dr Wakefield told a press conference called to publicise the paper at the time that in his opinion the three component vaccines should be given separately to reduce the impact on the child's

immune system. Reports of his remarks triggered widespread alarm among parents and supplies of the separate vaccines were quickly exhausted.

Dr Wakefield was unavailable for comment yesterday. A statement from the Royal Free medical school said it agreed that the policy on MMR vaccination should not be altered.

Sir John Pattison, the eminent microbiologist and government adviser on BSE and CJD, who chaired the meeting, said the benefits of MMR vaccination far outweighed the risks and there was no medical justification for giving the vaccines separately. "Children of that age are getting infection after infection. That is part of their development. What is the evidence that [giving the MMR vaccines together] is a bad thing to do? There isn't any."

At a later press conference yesterday, Sir Kenneth said the fall in vaccination rates following the *Lancet* paper was a "very serious issue" but he ruled out making the three vaccines available to parents who requested them. That would mean children having three injections instead of one and exposed them to the risk of going for two years without at least one vaccine during a critical period.

Jabs, the organisation representing parents who believe their children have been damaged by vaccination, criticised the findings. Jackie Fletcher, the group's spokeswoman, said: "We're concerned that this seminar was just a one-day workshop and there was certainly not sufficient time to properly look at the issue. We are calling on the Government to hold a proper open forum where experts can be invited from abroad."

Fight for green: Above, 'Justin' defending a tunnel at the poplar tree protest in Kingston, Surrey. Below, police remove an eco-warrior. Photographs: Gretel Ensign/Andy Blackmore

Madness as developer improves the view

By Chris Blackhurst

IT WAS not the promised air-raid siren that woke us up yesterday morning, but the incessant whirr of a police helicopter.

The eco-protesters down the road from our house in Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, promised that when the bailiffs came to evict them we would be roused by a klaxon. In the end, it was the drone of a police surveillance unit, just hovering and watching, that shattered our tranquillity.

All winter, along with our neighbours we have given money and signed petition forms in support of the eco-warriors trying to stop the felling of 56 poplar trees in a public park adjoining the River Thames.

The issue was simple. Fairclough Homes had built luxury townhouses on the private

land behind the trees; in order to sell them as having "river views", down the trees had to come. The local council, in a fit of madness, agreed; and down they must come.

These are trees in Canbury Gardens, a quiet, peaceful stretch of river bank close to Kingston town centre. My children play there. Stand in my road and look towards the river and the trees are there, where they have stood since anyone can remember, a splash of nature amid an encroaching urban landscape. Not for much longer.

Yesterday, at an estimated cost to the local council of £500,000, a huge police and security operation swung into force. Its target was our heroes, people who have made us feel embarrassed and more than a little ashamed these past few months; who, while we cosied up in our warm, snug homes,



were prepared to camp out, to live in tree houses, to dig tunnels, to save our poplars.

Not their trees, notice - most of the protesters are not from Kingston, but are veterans of similar campaigns at Newbury and Manchester Airport. This one, though, is different: those efforts were about stopping a road and a runway, which at least would be used by everyone; this is about saving some trees so that some well-off people can have a better view.

The madness that has gripped elsewhere yesterday

descended on our own patch of suburbia. At first light, a flotilla of police and security guards in rubber dinghies sailed up the Thames and landed on the area where my five-year-old likes to play football.

Joined by back-up support - "120 police and 140 private security", said Kingston undersheriff John Hargrove, in charge of the operation, proudly - they erected security fencing all around. The public river walk was cordoned off, nobody could get near the trees.

Then they started the slow, laborious ritual of hauling the protesters out, one by one. In all, seven people were arrested. More, surely, will follow, as they begin the serious task of clearing the tunnels and bring in the "cherry-pickers" to get them down from the trees.

These events have their own rhythm and strange, twisted, language. Everything was being done for our "safety" and the safety of the protesters, we were told. They kept saying it over and over again. But we were not consulted. Nobody asked us what we thought about the trees; nobody listened when thousands of local people signed a petition asking they be saved; nobody wondered if we minded paying for yesterday's insanity.

Behind the guards with eyes too close together who looked as though they had been bussed in for the two or three days of the clear up, stood a security man brandishing a video camera.

When asked what he was doing, he said he was filming because they liked to learn from each protest, to get it right next time.

And there will be next times - for our own safety, of course.

Pop star takes the ultimate rap for a life of living dangerously

IN THE NEWS
MARK MORRISON



Going down: 'Some people can cope and some people cannot. Mark Morrison was one of those who cannot'

POP stars very, very rarely go to jail. For all the bravado, anti-establishment stances, drugs, under-age sex and demolition of hotel rooms, their behaviour usually falls short of a custodial sentence, writes David Lister, Arts News Editor.

On the few occasions it has happened, good lawyers and public sympathy have usually managed to curtail the extent of the stay inside. The legendary imprisonment of Mick Jagger in the Sixties in fact lasted no more than 48 hours.

Yesterday though, the rap star Mark Morrison was sent down. And for a year. But for Morrison public sympathy is likely to be limited. The case that led to his imprisonment may have had an almost comic element to it. He sent an imposter to do community service for him while he went on tour. But the original crime of affray for which he received the community service involved a violent brawl in which a man was killed.

The self-styled "baddest boy of pop", Morrison's recent history is littered with crime and violence. The 1995 number one hit "Return Of The Mack" for which he is best known appears to have been the catalyst that drove him into lawlessness according to his lawyer, David

Evans, yesterday. He said that Leicester-born Morrison, who now lives in west London, "had shot into prominence very quickly".

He had buckled under the pressure that exists in "that milieu" and began doing drink and drugs - but mainly drink, said Mr Evans.

His jailing for 12 months followed a newspaper exposing that the 25-year-old singer sent an imposter to complete the work at a homeless hostel in London on his behalf.

It was the second time Morrison had been before the court

for breaching the 150-hour order he was given in 1995 for his part in a night club fracas in which a student died, the court heard.

He failed to turn up at Leicester Crown Court for re-sentencing last month because he was in Barbados for "drugs rehabilitation" and was arrested on his return to London's Heathrow airport last week.

He went to Barbados to think about the future - his father is terminally ill - and he wanted to say sorry to the court, Mr Evans said.

He probably also needed to

JUDGE CHRISTOPHER PITCHERS' THE DEFENCE
 "Like some other young men, having reached the pinnacle he has fallen very sharply to earth."

THE STAGE ACT
 "I was a published novelist backed by female fans and as such I was a VIP. As a result I was arrogant and contemptuous of the order of the court."

Smash Hits ceremony he appeared on stage holding a fake gun and wearing a T-shirt under his fur coat bearing the slogan "Not guilty".

ON HIS TIME IN AMERICA
 "When I was there, I learned about hunger and ambition."

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**Who's Who confessions**

"ONE OF the great ornaments of British civilisation," was how Lord Jenkins of Hillhead described *Who's Who* at its 150th birthday bash on Monday night.

It was also the 50th anniversary of Roy's first inclusion in the social climber's bible and he celebrated with a rousing speech to the assembled "names" in the long room of the National Portrait Gallery. Confessing that he is an avid browser of both *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who*, his only complaint was about people who refused to allow their home addresses to be published. Did these literary types who gave their agents' addresses really fear that their gardens would be invaded by a mob of fawning readers?

Unsurprisingly for a celebration that was also a promotional event, a large percentage of the names on the list of invited guests was made up of journalists. So much so, perhaps, that it confused people. One lady, wedged between the vivid portraits of Bobby Charlton and Salman Rushdie, was overheard to say, "Oh look, there's Kenneth Baker. Doesn't he have a lovely tan? Didn't he used to read the news on television?" One journalist not on the printed list of guests but very much in evidence at the party was Andrew Neil. Pandora could not believe that the shy, retiring Glaswegian editor-in-chief and chat-show host would have crashed such an event. Sure enough, a spokeswoman for *Who's Who* explained, "He was invited but he was a bit naughty and didn't bother to reply." As busy as he is these days, perhaps Neil confused the party with his usual evening out at Tramp.

High jinks in Hollywood

FORGET about *Vanity Fair*'s big show-off post-Oscar party; all the genuine fun this year took place over the weekend at Miramax's pre-awards Hollywood party. In vivid contrast to the mawkish Academy ceremony, Robin Williams (right) performed a rude and totally unsentimental stand-up act while Madonna rolled in the aisles with laughter. Then, reports the *New York Post*, Matt Damon, star and co-author of the Miramax blockbuster *Good Will Hunting*, dressed up as a woman to spoof *Mrs Brown*. Finally, Dame Judi Dench and Helena Bonham Carter put on hard-hats for their take-off of *Hunting*. Perhaps next year Miramax will film their party and offer it as a genuinely funny television alternative to Billy Crystal's wretched jokes.

Feeling faint at Filthy's

A PERFORMANCE that sounds rather more British (and considerably less fun) took place recently at Filthy McNasty's pub in Islington: a reading of *The Smoke King* by author Maurice Leitch. Among the guests was former dope lord, bestselling author and cannabis crusader Howard Marks, who brought along his mum. The reading went on... and on... and on. Suddenly a man standing beside Marks along one wall of the room fell over in a dead faint. One wag asked, "Was it because of the powerful fumes from Howard's hair?" Or just a contact high?

Mo's Irish mystery

WHO WILL be the next Director of Information at the Northern Ireland Office - the job otherwise known as "Mo's Mouthpiece"?

One rumour that has reached Pandora's ear about the replacement for Andy Wood, long-time holder of the position, says that the new appointment will be Cherie Dodd, the former *Mirror* political correspondent recently shifted to cover industrial affairs for the paper. When Pandora rang the *Mirror* yesterday to congratulate Cherie, she was out of the office. "In Northern Ireland for the day," said a newsdesk spokesman. "She'll be back tomorrow." But not for long, as the job is a three-year appointment and Cherie is intending to move the whole family to Belfast.

Mandelson changes socks

AN IMPORTANT correction was made to later editions of press releases of Peter Mandelson's speech to the Newspaper Conference at the Hilton yesterday. In the original draft, the Minister without Portfolio was quoted as saying "The Dome is a wonderful building and the contents are going to blow your socks off." Subsequent versions changed the verb "blow" to the verb "knock". Pandora can well understand why this change was made and compliments the Minister for doing an absolutely first-rate job.

Pandora

DAILY POEM**Somewhere**

By Neil Powell

Logs are being sawn somewhere.
Easing through the softened air,

Heavy with rain and sodden leaves.
The sound of blade on timber gives

An edge to cloud's infinities.
Mist batresses the nervous trees,
Smoke jostles where the cloud resists,
But there below the saw persists.

The blade gives edge to what it takes.
The world is split. The timber breaks.

Our poems until Friday come from Neil Powell's Selected Poems (Carcane, £8.95). Powell, who lives in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, has published critical works such as *Carpenters of Light* and *The Language of Jazz* as well as four collections for Carcane since 1977.



Knight in shining armour: Sir John Hall yesterday

Bold Sir John back to save Newcastle image

By Simon Turnbull

THE sound of alarm bells from the corridors of St James' Park accompanied the announcement in September last year that Sir John Hall would be standing down as chairman of Newcastle United Football Club. It proved to be a false alarm for the officers of the Tyne and Wear Fire Brigade, but not a false omen for the flagship of Tyneside.

"I feel I've done everything I set out to achieve," Sir John said six months ago. "I want to do a lot of other things. I want to finish the gardens at Wyndham Hall."

Yesterday, the bold Sir John left behind the trowel and the mower at his Co Durham estate to attend to the boardroom mess at the club. He did so as the knight in shining armour.

having accepted the challenge of restoring Newcastle United's tarnished reputation.

His son, Douglas, and his successor as chairman, Freddy Shepherd, were not around to face the music of a suit packed to the rafters with members of the media at St James' Park. Having reluctantly done the decent thing, however, and fallen upon the boardroom sword, they left Sir John with no option but to not so much pick up

the gauntlet as run with it.

The millionaire property developer whose money financed Newcastle's rise from near bankruptcy in 1992 to a place in the European Cup agreed yesterday to return as chairman of the football club until the end of May. He did so with anger in his heart: not, it transpired, for his prodigal son and the straying Shepherd, but

for the very unveiling of their shortcomings in the black and white of the *News of the World*.

"The effect on the Hall and the Shepherd families has been awful," he said, "and the effect on Newcastle United has been sad to watch. Freddy and Douglas are full of remorse and can't apologise enough."

"They have worked tirelessly over the years to bring jobs to the North-east and to build Newcastle United from a club on the brink of bankruptcy and the old Third Division to a major force in the game. They are the ones who brought me to the club... That has been forgotten in the last 10 days."

The vilification has been terrible to watch. Yes, it was self-inflicted. But why were they targeted? Why were they set-up? I have been astonished to learn that one of the people

involved in this expensive scam has a criminal record. The human cost has been immense. Please, please let us get on with our lives."

It was not so much a conference as a tirade. Sir John took no questions as he made his stem-faced departure. It had been different six months ago. The last word then belonged to the chairman-elect. "We hope Sir John makes good use of his bus pass," Mr Shepherd had said.

Yesterday, as Sir John returned, the chairman-deposed was not in the mood to talk let alone joke. Tracked down to a Barbados beach, Freddy Shepherd told a BBC television crew "no comment", before thrusting a paperback in front of the camera lens. It was a bit late for a cover up.

Business Outlook, page 23

We are not suggesting anyone needs to jump hurdles over the nearest filing cabinet. Nor are we saying running rings around the boss is a wise political move. But if we tell you that CDX by K is a classic, executive style shoe with all the advanced design innovation of a sports shoe, then you might be catching our drift.

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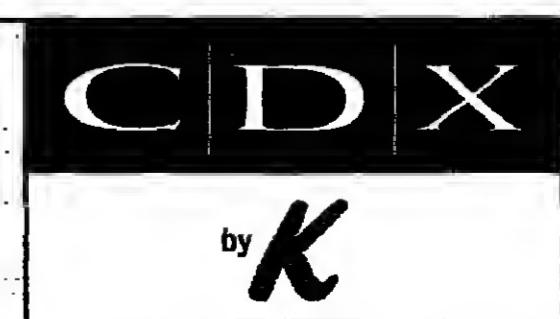
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Blair denies aiding Murdoch bid for stake in Italian TV

By Colin Brown
and Andrew Gumbel



QUESTIONS remained unanswered last night over whether Tony Blair met Rupert Murdoch to discuss the media magnate's attempts to take a stake in the Italian broadcasting market.

The Prime Minister in Paris denied doing any favours for Mr Murdoch after the Mr Blair's official spokesman in London had angrily described as "a joke" reports that Mr Blair had intervened on Mr Murdoch's behalf over the takeover.

Downing Street sources said the Prime Minister had held talks last week with Romano Prodi, the Prime Minister of Italy, over the telephone, but insisted that the call came from Mr Prodi. That version of events was confirmed in Rome.

However, Mr Blair's spokesman refused to deny that Mr Blair used the opportunity to discuss the Murdoch issue. "They had a discussion about common issues and I do not intend to brief upon all of it," said the spokesman.

Last night, Downing Street also refused to discuss suggestions in Italy that the Prime Minister recently met Mr Murdoch.

"I have no information about whether there were meetings with the Prime Minister," said a Number Ten source. "I am reluctant to go through the

diary on what would have been a private meeting."

The unanswered questions could prove embarrassing for Mr Blair as the Government faces the prospect of having to overturn a Lords defeat on the Competition Bill which, if unchanged, could prevent Mr Murdoch selling the *Times*, owned by his News Corp group at a cut-rate price.

The embarrassment for the Prime Minister over the reports may have been eclipsed by the discomfort for Mr Murdoch who had found himself sucked into a complex Italian political game in which he was played for a fool. According to Mr Murdoch's Italian lawyers, it was Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Opposition leader and former prime minister, who initiated the dialogue with Mr Murdoch by inviting BSkyB, in which he has a stake, to make an offer for Mr Berlusconi's media holding company Mediaset.

Sources in Italy said Mr Murdoch could not have talked to Mr Blair before Friday at the earliest. That was the day the deal collapsed and Mr Murdoch left Italy. But it seems he left a door open: Mr Murdoch and Mr Berlusconi met again in London on Saturday to discuss other areas of possible mutual interest.

"The deal is off for the moment, but I would not be surprised if negotiations resumed for a third time," commented one source close to the Murdoch camp. Shares in Mediaset fell on Monday as news that the take-over had collapsed, but they steadied yesterday.

Mr Berlusconi's previous flirtation with selling to Mr Murdoch, in 1995, went nowhere as Mediaset opted instead for a recapitalisation and a flotation on the Milan stock exchange.

"Mr Murdoch did not want a repeat of his last negotiations, which lasted several months before ending in failure. He agreed to make an offer, but gave Berlusconi just 72 hours to

decide," explained Luca Ambroldi, of the legal firm Carnevali in Milan.

An offer of 10,000 lire per share – or \$8.3 trillion for Mr Berlusconi's controlling 50.6 per cent stake in Mediaset – was put on the table over dinner at Mr Berlusconi's private chateau at Arcore, outside Milan, 10 days ago. Mr Murdoch then withdrew to the Villa d'Este on the shores of Lake Como and waited for a reply.

On Thursday, with just hours to go before the deadline, the supposedly top-secret talks began to be artfully leaked, first to the Milan newspaper *Corriere della Sera* and then to Mr Berlusconi's own Canale 5 evening news programme. Senior figures in Italy's centre-left coalition government immediately reacted, urging Mr Berlusconi to prevent the country's private television stations falling into foreign hands. "Better Berlusconi than Murdoch," was the reaction of one left-winger.

Blair's muddle, page 17



Cleaning up: John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, with Leon Valero, a seven-year-old asthma sufferer, in London yesterday to launch a government campaign called Doing Your Bit which aims to cut pollution

Photograph: Peter Jordan/PA

Peer condemns 'lobbyist' Prime Minister

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

LORD McNALLY, the Liberal Democrat peer, provided the best take yesterday on the Prime Minister's actions on behalf of Rupert Murdoch's business plans in Italy: "Here we are straining every sinew to make sure lobbyists in Parliament are controlled. Then we find out that the Prime Minister is a lobbyist."

But he is not surprised. It was he who sponsored the amendment to the competition Bill passing through Parliament that would end the predatory pricing tactics of Mr Murdoch's *Times* newspaper.

The Government, because of its friendly relations with Mr Murdoch, opposed the amendment but was defeated by a cross-party alliance of peers by 121 votes to 93. Nevertheless, when the Bill returns to the Commons in 10 days time, the Government will rip the

amendment from it. "There is to be no compromise measure," said Lord McNally. "The only question is the lengths they go to, whipping for Murdoch, to quell any Labour revolt."

The protection of the *Times'* pricing policy is just one of a number of issues where the Blair government has come to the aid of the News Corp empire.

In the aftermath of the HarperCollins disposal of the book by Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, and *Times* correspondent Jonathan Mirsky's assertion that newspaper is soft on China, the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, asked the Government to look at the conditions that permitted Mr Murdoch to take over the *Times* in 1981.

The then trade secretary, John Biffen, laid down eight conditions for a non-referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and Mr Ashdown wrote to Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of

Trade, to ask her to look at how these conditions were being breached over China.

Ms Beckett wrote to Mr Ashdown warning her hands of the paper's editorial independence: "Disputes between management and the editor on breaches on independence... are a matter for the editor of the *Times* and the [Times'] independent national directors and not for the Government" – which is exactly the opposite of what parliament was told in 1981.

In the same way, the Government has dismissed out of hand the requests of Labour backbenchers and countless others for new ownership legislation that would reduce the scale of Mr Murdoch's holdings in the United Kingdom.

The Blair government has also come to the aid of Mr Murdoch in less direct ways. As the biggest newspaper proprietor, he had most to gain by Mr Blair's immediate rejection of privacy legisla-

tion in the aftermath of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

For the same reason, the imminent government decision on how to protect the press, and the Press Complaints Commission, from the privacy provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights cannot be seen as driven purely by a desire to protect press freedom. Even inadvertently the Government can be seen to favour Mr Murdoch. Last week's decision by an independent working party looking at the "jewels in the crown" sports (those protected for terrestrial television) to loosen the protection for English home cricket test matches, can be seen to hand BSkyB yet another sport.

All of which makes Tony Blair rather more valuable than the average Westminster lobbyist. The question is whether Mr Murdoch will pay his price of support at the next election and over a move to monetary union.

Photograph: Peter Jordan/PA

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Employers may sack staff to take on New Deal recruits

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

THE Government's flagship New Deal programme will

inevitably push some young people out of work to create places for others who are on the scheme. Whitehall officials conceded yesterday.

One of the key aims of the initiative is to help the most disadvantaged into work and young people regarded as more employable may have to pay the price, according to a senior civil servant at the Department for Education and Employment.

Some employers may dismiss existing staff in order to take advantage of the £60-a-week government subsidy for providing work for young people on the

New Deal. For the same reason, it is also likely that more capable job applicants will be rejected in favour of "sponsored" recruits.

Ministers hope the "substitution and displacement effect" will be limited and argue that it is a price worth paying.

A briefing paper issued by the department yesterday admits that some of those in the target group – 18 to 24-year-olds who have been out of work for more than six months – may get jobs at the expense of others "who either become unemployed, or stay in unemployment when they would have left it".

It adds: "These will largely be people who will be able to find jobs without much intervention from us. If the overall

employability of the workforce is raised, this should over time increase the economy's capacity to grow."

The scheme has been piloted in 12 "pathfinder" areas since 5 January and not one participant has so far fallen foul of the rules which ultimately provide for a 40 per cent cut in benefit, ministerial advisers said.

After a "Gateway" period of up to four months, participants are offered four options: a place on the Government's environmental task force, work with a voluntary organisation, full-time training or education, or a subsidised job. Ministers are fond of saying that there is no "fifth option".

Officials yesterday were at pains to point out that the New Deal may have a spurious impact on labour market statistics. Unemployed young people who move into a subsidised New Deal job for instance, will be shown as moving from the dole into employment.

Advisers accepted that this would only be "real" employment if the young person was kept on when the subsidy came to an end. The Government wanted to be open about such effects and did not want to be accused of "fiddling the figures".

Ministers were not interested in simply switching young people off benefit into dead-end jobs or schemes, they wanted to transform the long-term prospects of the most disadvantaged, the briefing paper said.

Last vestiges of caning swept away

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

A LIBERAL Democrat MP last night spoke of his "shame" at caning children as MPs voted to sweep away the last vestiges of corporal punishment in independent schools.

Former secondary school teacher, Phil Willis, the MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, said: "Whenever I caned a child, I felt demeaned by it. Quite frankly, I felt quite ashamed later in life to feel that for many years I supported the use of corporal punishment."

Caning is banned in state schools but a handful of independent schools, some with strong religious connections, still administer corporal punishment. MPs were given a free vote by the Government to extend the ban in the independent schools during the final Commons stages of the School Standards Bill.

Eton, Harrow and the major public schools have all banned

caning, and the Independent Schools Council welcomed the extension of the ban on all corporal punishment.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrat spokesman on education, challenged Tory backbenchers who defended "spanking" on the grounds that it did children no harm.

Mr Willis said there was a need to use a degree of force, sometimes to protect pupils, but caning was an admission of failure in discipline in schools. The ban will also stop punishment with a slipper or a ruler. It will still allow parents to smack their children, and smacking by child minders with the approval of parents.

Corporal punishment in prisons and borstals was prohibited in 1967 – the same year that the Plowden report "Children and their Primary Schools" recommended banning corporal punishment in schools.

Although Labour declares all

£5,000, Mr Flynn said the limit could be difficult to police where payments were made in kind.

He urged the Neill Committee to look closely at the issue of sponsorship. Labour was planning to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds in that way this year, and the Tories had been known to use the same methods.

He gave Sir Patrick a list of recent Labour sponsorship deals, including funding for a Welfare to Work breakfast by British Aerospace, funding for a new MPs induction conference by the drug company Novartis and funding for a Welfare Reform roadshow by NTL Cable.

A Labour spokesman said its submission to the committee did not mention sponsorship because "it was not an attempt to draw up a new law. If somebody sponsors an event in the Labour Party and if that sponsorship amounts to more than £5,000, that is open and declared. The suggestion that there is some sort of secret dealing is wrong."

MP warns Labour of 'the new sleaze'

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

LABOUR'S plans to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds through sponsorship this year amount to "the new sleaze," one of its MPs has told an inquiry.

Publishing of the submission from Paul Flynn to the Neill inquiry into party funding comes just a day after *The Independent* revealed how Labour is seeking sponsorship through lobbying firms. The party is maintaining links with staff who now work as lobbyists and has asked them to raise money from their clients.

Mr Flynn, MP Newport West, has told Sir Patrick Neill that his party's own suggestions on future political funding do not mention sponsorship at all. This could allow companies to avoid the new regulations, he said, and to give money without consulting their shareholders.

Although Labour declares all

High-flyer whose attraction was fatal

By Kate Watson-Smyth

YOUNG, black, female gynaecologists are rare in the NHS and Joan Francisco was one of these. She was also stunningly attractive and intelligent. But, as her sister Margrette said, she had a certain naivety and was a poor judge of character and poor chooser of men.

Dr Francisco's relationship with Tony Diedrick ended in December 1995 but he refused to accept it was over and on Boxing Day three years ago Dr Francisco was found dead in her west London flat. She had been due to fly to Los Angeles to spend the end of Christmas with her sisters, Margrete and Celia. Her funeral was attended by some of Britain's leading doctors and she was buried wearing her stethoscope.

Diedrick was arrested in March 1995 but freed without charge. The Francisco family then brought a civil action and yesterday Diedrick was named in the High Court as the murderer of Dr Francisco. The family is claiming up to £50,000 compensation.

Giving judgment, Mr Justice Alffit said Dr Francisco was a "remarkably attractive woman" who climbed high from a humble background. She drove a BMW, went to clubs and friends included the former Wimbleton footballer John Fastham and the boxer Lennox Lewis.

But the picture of the jet-setting party animal was tempered by a more intimate portrait of the home-loving baby of the family who played her mother's favourite pieces on the piano and delighted in giving surprise presents. The Franciscos lived in a modest house in Acton, west London, and the three children were encouraged to be curious from an early age.

Their mother, Venus, from St Lucia, was a nurse, and their father, Alfred, from Belize, taught maths, physics and technical drawing in a secondary school until his retirement.

In an interview with the *Independent* last year Margrette recalled the family moving to Saudi Arabia for a couple of years when the sisters were

"She loved her work and cared passionately about her patients. She said bringing life into the world and saving lives was the most valuable contribution she could make."

Venus, said simply: "I shed tears every day for the loss of my precious daughter who brought life to so many during her short life as a gynaecologist and obstetrician. What a waste of life and talent."



Triumph: Margrette, Venus and Celia Francisco yesterday after Tony Diedrick (right) was named as the killer of Joan (above right)



Main photograph: Reuter

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Bowled over: A man aiming for the spittoon during the Champagne Information Bureau's annual tasting at the Plaisterers' Hall in London yesterday; the UK is now the wine's largest export market
Photograph: Philip Meech

Police chiefs urge ban on cannabis seed sales

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

NEW LAWS to ban the sale of cannabis seed and dope-growing equipment are being urged by police chiefs, it was disclosed yesterday.

The Home Office is also being pressed to bring in legislation to introduce a new penalty forcing people caught in possession of cannabis to have anti-drug counselling. First-time users would be given a choice between being prosecuted or receiving a caution, plus some treatment.

Both ideas are being promoted by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), in an attempt to clamp down on the use and availability of cannabis, which is the most popular drug in Britain.

There is concern about the an upsurge in the number of people growing cannabis at home in the past five years, particularly the strong "skunk" variety. Home-growers are ex-



Drugs tsar Keith Hellawell

ploiting a legal loop-hole that allows them to buy cannabis seeds and the growing equipment legitimately from specialist shops and mail order.

The cultivation of cannabis plants is illegal, but not the sale or purchase of seeds. Many cultivators grow the drug for their own consumption, but others produce crops worth tens of thousands of pounds to sell.

Colin Phillips, Chief Con-

stable of Cumbria, and head of ACPO's drug committee, said he had raised the issue with Keith Hellawell, the new British "drugs tsar", and would be urging Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to introduce a new offence of possession of seed and plant-growing equipment with the intention of cultivating cannabis.

He said: "A large number of shops, specialising in the supply of hydroponic [water culture] growing equipment, have emerged throughout the country... it is believed that some even supply small cuttings of cannabis plants. In addition, cannabis seed is supplied wholesale through various distributors nationwide. As the law stands there is no specific offence of either supplying cannabis seed or supplying hydroponic systems."

There are an estimated 500,000 illegal cannabis plants being grown in Britain. Seeds cost from £40 to £70 for a packet of 10, depending on variety. Growing equipment, which in-

cludes trays and a lighting system, starts at £75.

Mr Phillips is also keen for the Government to adopt a scheme known as "cannabis plus", which is being piloted in a small number of voluntary projects including West Yorkshire and Bristol.

Under the system, anyone caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis on their first, second or possibly third time, is given the choice of receiving counselling as well as a caution. Chief constables believe this system should be made compulsory, although they acknowledge it would need a huge injection of extra cash to pay for treatment centres and counsellors.

The number of cautions given for possession of cannabis has increased almost tenfold in a decade, from 4,048 in 1986 to 40,391 by 1995.

Mr Phillips said that Home Office officials were "encouraging" about the proposals and that discussions were on-going.

Legalisation campaign rally

By Graham Bell

ON SATURDAY the cannabis debate takes to the streets of central London for the first time in 30 years. Supporters of the *Independent On Sunday*'s campaign to decriminalise Britain's most popular illicit drug are travelling from all over the country to Hyde Park for a march through the capital and a rally in Trafalgar Square.

The march will be led by Labour MP Paul Flynn, who will be joined by the founder of Italy's Radical Party, Marco Pannella, prominent campaigner for reform of European drug laws and MEPs from Belgium, Italy and France. Britain's most colourful cannabis campaigner Howard Marks is also to speak at the rally.

The police have issued a warning to motorists to avoid the Piccadilly and Park Lane area on Saturday afternoon. "We are expecting a crowd of between five and 16,000 marchers," a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said.

One of the organisers of the last legalise-cannabis mass demonstration in London in

1968, Caroline Coon, will be among the marchers this Saturday. "I'm tremendously excited by this development," said Ms Coon, a writer and artist and one of the founders of the drug charity Release.

"I was on the first London pot rally in 1967 and helped organise the one the following year but I think this is going to be bigger. The drug issue is more important today than it was 30 years ago because we have all seen how the so-called war against drugs is really a war against people," she said.

During the six months that the campaign to decriminalise cannabis has been running in the *ios* it has attracted the support of many prominent figures in the arts and entertainment, medicine and academia. The neurophysiologist Professor Colin Blakemore, Martin Amis, Harold Pinter, Margaret Drabble, Damien Hirst and legal expert Professor Michael Zander are among the many who have signed the paper's petition.

Join Saturday's march at Reformer's Tree in Hyde Park, central London, at midday. Information on: 0181 964 2692.

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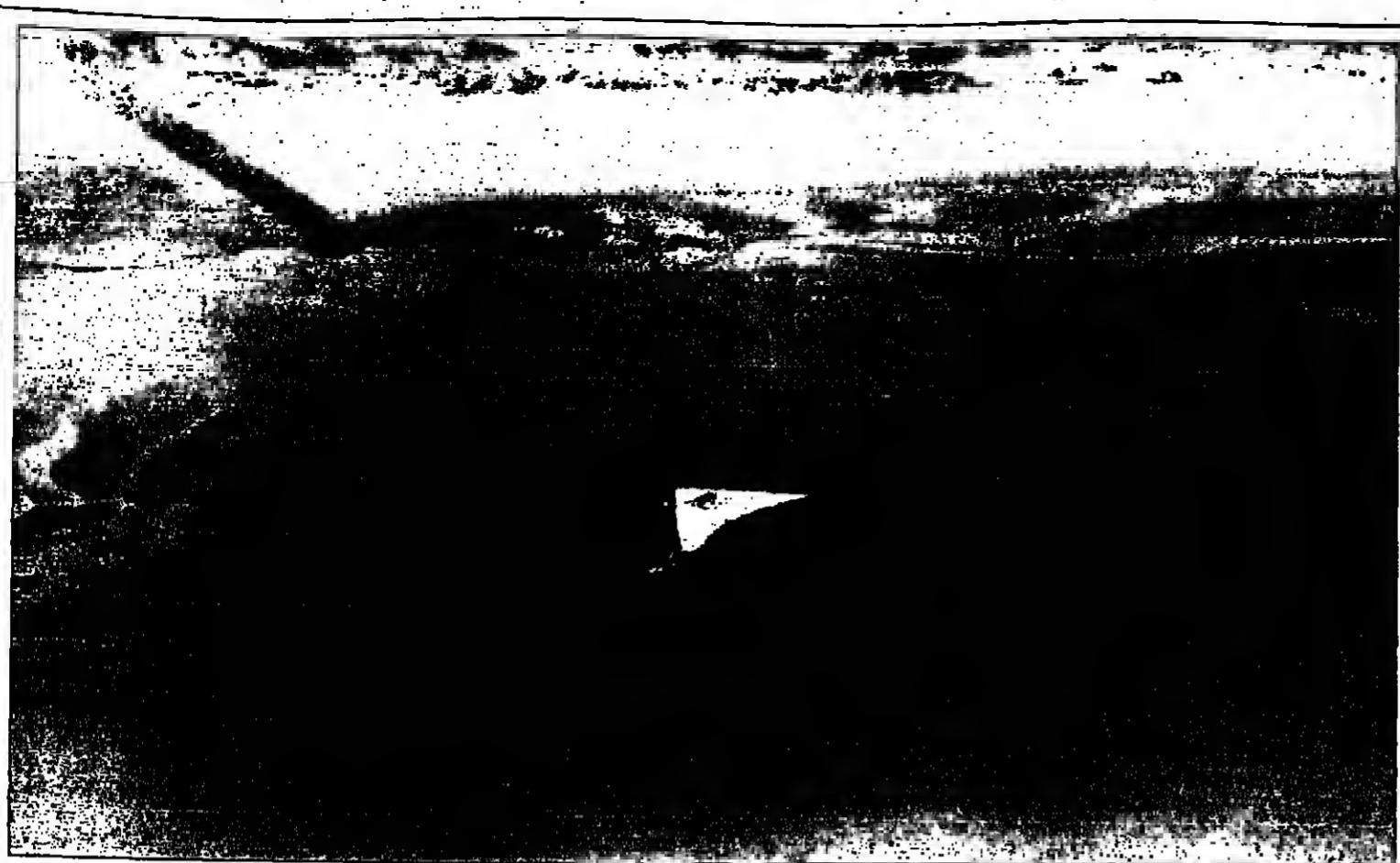
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Coastal approach: Brian Milton and Keith Reynolds coming in to land in France yesterday on the first leg of their journey. Photograph: Andrew Buurma

Pilot in microlight convoy crashes in France

A ROUND-the-world attempt by two microlight pilots was marred by a serious accident yesterday when a colleague travelling in convoy was hurt in a crash.

Phil Good was preparing to fly back to Britain from Le Touquet on the French coast when his microlight

crashed. He had flown across the English Channel with 33 other microlights accompanying Brian Milton and Keith Reynolds in *GT Global Flyer* which had set off earlier yesterday on the first leg of their journey from Brooklands Museum near Weybridge, Surrey, in an attempt to recreate the epic journey

made by Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Simon Newlyn, publicity director for *GT Global Flyer*, said: "The tragic accident happened at about 12.30pm GMT when Mr Good was starting his aircraft to return to England when it appeared to reach full revs and ran out

of control. The microlight hit another aircraft on the tarmac and crashed into an airport building."

One eyewitness at the airport said the microlight crashed through the windows of the passport-control building. Mr Good was taken to hospital after being treated for injuries on the airfield.

Headteachers attack parents over truancy

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

HEADTEACHERS yesterday called for legislation to outlaw parents from taking cheap term-time holidays as part of a crackdown on persistent truants.

The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) also urged stern action against children who are continually late and said that it would back moves towards cutting child benefit from those parents who encouraged their children not to attend school.

David Hart, general secretary of the NAHT, said that lateness for lessons and children being taken out of school for holidays eroded discipline and encouraged truancy. A union submission to ministers argues that both can foster a "lax attitude" to attending school.

Heads say it is essential to convince parents that "truancy equals poor results, leading to unemployment, crime and a wasted life". Estimates suggest that as many as a million children play truant at some time.

Some are as young as seven. Headteachers are hoping the Prime Minister's Social Ex-

clusion Unit will back a hard line to tackle away from school during term time. That would send a strong message to parents that they are supposed to have their children at school.

Margaret Morrissey, spokeswoman for the National Association of Parent Teacher Associations, said parents would be helped if the heavy peak-time cost of travel was reduced. She said: "We really need to be getting together with the travel agents and all the people who make money out of parents at holiday time. We do not condone parents who take children out of school, but it can be understandable."

"What we would like to see is some support for parents who are failing to get their children to go to school."

The Government has committed £21m to initiatives designed to reduce truancy. Parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school already face fines of up to £1,000, but prosecutions are rare.

An Audit Commission study has shown that two-thirds of school-age offenders against the law are either excluded pupils or persistent truants.

Genetic-crop threat to wildlife survival

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

FIELDS of genetically engineered crops may lead to the starvation of wildlife, government advisers warned yesterday. Birds and insects could be deprived of the weeds and weed seeds which are an important food source.

The reason is that many of these crops are designed to be used with broad-spectrum herbicides which wipe out every kind of plant except the crop itself, which has been genetically modified to be resistant to the weedkiller.

The Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment is concerned that when this revolutionary technology takes off, cereal fields and their borders will be even more weed-free than they are with modern intensive farm-

ing techniques. The committee's chairman, John Beringer, Professor of Molecular Genetics at Bristol University, said: "It could be cranking up the pressure on species if this technology proceeds to the limit."

The committee's job is to advise ministers on what genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, can safely be released for use in the environment. GMOs are created when genes from one plant or animal are shifted permanently into the DNA of another, creating varieties unlikely to arise in evolution or through ordinary breeding techniques.

Several companies are jostling to bring GMOs to Europe. The crops are widely grown in the United States, but in the European Union they face hurdles set up by the EU and by its member states. There have been many small trials, but the earliest that

a GMO can legally be planted on a commercial basis will probably be next spring, or later. The frontrunner is a modified oilseed rape owned by a Belgian company, Plant Genetic Systems.

The committee yesterday held its first press conference, on the publication of its fourth annual report, reflecting members' concern that the public is baffled and fearful about genetic engineering.

Professor Beringer said that the committee's main aim was not to endorse any GMO product, which was more harmful than its ordinary equivalent.

The committee considers each application case by case. That means it may miss the cumulative impact of many GMOs being approved and grown in Britain, he said, adding: "We ought to flag up things which could be a problem."

Evans in bid for digital radio

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

THE rather dry world of digital radio was given an injection of life yesterday when it was announced that the unlikely bedfellows of Classic FM and Chris Evans were joining forces to apply for a digital radio licence.

Digital radio - known as DAB - will mean compact disc-quality sound coming out of radios which never crackle or lose their signal. It can broadcast text, graphics, pictures and information services and can talk to personal and laptop computers.

The Radio Authority advertised a national commercial digital licence yesterday that will give the winner 12 years to establish, in competition with the BBC, digital radio in the United Kingdom.

Chris Evans' Ginger Media Group has joined forces in the first bid to be announced with GWR, owners of Classic FM and a network of local radio stations. The bid was in the name of a new consortium, Digital One. Richard Branson, a part-owner of Ginger Media Group, is expected to get involved in the bid.

Other radio groups, such as London's Capital and EMAP, are also expected to bid for the licence by the June deadline. The Radio Authority wants whoever wins to encourage people to buy digital radios - currently retailing for more than £1,000 - so they can be mass produced and the price will fall.

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Blacks still facing hard times in Liverpool's own form of apartheid

By Kim Sengupta

THE PUB at Liverpool docksides is for the mainly black clientele. "They generally kept together, the poor fellows, because they were at a disadvantage simply, and liable to slights in neighbouring streets," a police chief told a visiting writer from London.

That was in 1861, and the writer was Charles Dickens. When Anthony Bevins, *The Independent's* political editor, reported from his native city in 1989, a huge number of the pubs were still segregated and the police, while many local blacks would say, were a lot less sympathetic.

The Independent's investigation into community relations in Liverpool followed a damning report by Lord Gifford who found that racial discrimination in Liverpool was "uniquely horrific." Mr Bevins concluded that the city practised "its own unique brand of apartheid," and the population, including some blacks, close their mind to this fact.

Nine years on, Tony Blair stated his commitment to a multicultural Britain. But the city's wife, Cherie, was born and raised to remain divided and full of distrust.

There are people who say little has changed. Liverpool, which has the oldest residential black population in the country, has just one black councillor out of 99, and just 0.3 per cent of local authority employees is estimated to be black. In 1996, a survey by the University of Liverpool suggested that one in every two members of the area's ethnic population had suffered racial abuse.

Just a mile from the predominantly black area of Toxteth is the city centre where it is highly unusual to see a black person serving at the stores, or working in offices.

Over the years, Liverpool has built up a reputation as a place of racial tolerance and harmony. That, say black activists, is a mirage. The city had effectively operated a policy of segregation punctuated by outbreaks of violence. In 1919 and in 1948 there were race riots. Blacks were kept out of the better jobs and lived in areas with the worst housing.

In 1984, the Commission for Racial Equality reported systematic discrimination in the city council's housing policy. Five years later, the CRE issued a formal no-discrimination notice against the coun-



Empty promises: Stephen Nze in Granby Street, Toxteth, once a vibrant mixture of residential homes and shops, now virtually deserted, with shops boarded up and many buildings pulled down

Photograph:
Martin Rickett/Newspix

of a council redevelopment operation, but locals claim they had not been properly consulted, and the community does not want to be dispersed in this fashion.

Stephen Nze said: "It just shows the contempt they have for people around here. They would not behave like this towards white people in north Liverpool. In their eyes, our opinion isn't worth anything. Heseltine poured a lot of money in, but what happened to it?"

Academics and other experts maintain that black pressure groups are wrong to state that their views are totally ignored. Gideon Bent-Towin, a councillor and university reader, said: "The ethnic minorities do have greater access to channels to the authorities, so in that respect things have improved although they are far from perfect."

Anne Wright, equality manager at Liverpool City Council, stressed that the council was not sanguine about the situation. She pointed out that a number of measures have been taken to further racial equality, adding: "We know there is a major problem, and it is not something we are taking lightly."

cil because nothing had been done. The discrimination had continued during Militant's stormy stewardship of the city. In fact, Derek Hatton and his comrades were vehemently opposed to any form of special help being given to the ethnic minorities because they claimed it would lead to a white backlash and weaken working-class solidarity.

This working-class solidarity does not extend to white residents accepting blacks as their neighbours

in the better off working-class areas, say pressure groups. The best of the council and Housing Trust properties is in the north of the city, and few black families who moved there from the south have managed to settle, most driven out by harassment.

At the Liverpool 8 Law Centre, which grew out of the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee following the Toxteth riots, co-ordinator Maria O'Reilly, said: "There are parts of north Liverpool where black peo-

ple would not go alone after dark because they would be attacked and may even be killed. This is not melodramatic, you do find black dead bodies there and no one knows what bad happened. Black families who have moved there also face a lot of harassment. What has improved in the last nine years? Next to nothing. Liverpool is a deeply racist city with its own form of apartheid. It's a strange situation, white Liverpool people encounter apartheid in

South Africa, yet fail to see a problem here. No wonder black people feel that they don't matter in the eyes of the authorities."

The feeling of disenchanted and hopelessness is felt acutely in the streets of Toxteth. Granby Street was once a busy mixture of residential housing and shops. Now it lies virtually deserted with shattered shop fronts, empty homes and the rubble of pulled down buildings.

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Lawrence inquiry told of catalogue of police blunders

By Kathy Marks

Police investigating the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence were given the names of the five main suspects within 24 hours but failed to arrest them until a fortnight later, the judicial inquiry into his death was told yesterday.

That decision was described as "seriously flawed" by Edmund Lawson, QC, the government-appointed counsel to the inquiry, who used the first day of the hearing to deliver a blistering critique of the conduct of the police investigation. Mr Lawson highlighted examples of alleged incompetence at every stage, including the "crass" failure of a surveillance photographer to report two incidents of bags being removed from the home of two suspects - bags which, he said, might have contained bloodstained clothing.

The inquiry, ordered by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, is examining issues arising from the death of Stephen, 18, who was stabbed by a white gang at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, five years ago. Mr Lawson's criticisms were echoed by Michael Mansfield, QC, counsel for the Lawrence family, who said the identities of the five white youths were repeated to detectives by 26 different sources - including three police officers - in the two weeks before the arrests.

The suspects, members of a local gang, were named in telephone calls to the incident room and in anonymous letters as being involved in Stephen's murder as well as in a recent spate of racist killings and attacks in the area. Charges against the five youths - Neil and Jamie Acourt, Gary Dobson,

added: "The inordinate and extensive delays and fractions give rise to one plain question: was the initial investigation ever intended to result in a successful prosecution?"

He said it was incredible, given that 56 officers were assigned to the case on the first night, that - he alleged - there was no systematic search of the area and witnesses were not properly debriefed.

Pursuing the theme of racial disharmony, Mr Mansfield quoted from a statement that Mrs Lawrence is to make to the inquiry today. In it, she says: "Stephen was well-loved and had he been given the chance to survive, maybe he would have been the one to bridge the gap between black and white. Because he did not distinguish between black and white; he saw people as people."

For his part, Mr Lawson was particularly scathing about the "inexcusable" failure of officers to act on early tip-offs, and the resulting delays before identity parades were held and suspect houses were searched.

"It appears that in a number of material respects, the police conduct of the investigation went badly wrong," he said. "Why weren't those arrests and searches carried out much, much more quickly? The police, if they can, must answer the indictment of delay."

A catalogue of police errors listed by Mr Lawson included their alleged failure to administer first aid to Stephen at the scene, to liaise sensitively with his family or to deal appropriately with important witnesses such as Duwayne Brooks, Stephen's friend. Forensic evidence such as a bloodstained t-shirt was lost, he said.

Dramatic twist to trial by TV

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

ONCE to watch TV actors play out a courtroom drama in front of a jury of real people you had to be taking a sickie. The three-day format of Crown Court in the Seventies meant people often extended their sick leave after they were well so they could see the verdict from fictitious Fifechester on a Friday afternoon.

But now it is back and you won't have to lie to your boss. This summer ITV's resurrecting the Crown Court format in

Accused, a new, weekly hour-long courtroom drama that will air in the evening peak time. Actors will again play the defence, prosecution, witnesses and judges, while members of the public will form the jury, and come to an unscripted verdict.

ITV announced the new show in its Spring and Summer season launch yesterday and hinted that the viewing figures for the Louise Woodward trial had influenced its thinking.

"There is scope for a court room drama in peak time," said David Liddiment, ITV's director of programming. "The

idea of using members of the public for the jury has always been an attractive idea. Crown Court used to have fantastic writers and powerful stories and I want this to be a modern drama with really contemporary stories."

Mr Liddiment said that using real people in a jury was the closest television could come to Court TV in America which attracts big audiences for trials. In the UK, satellite channel Sky News quadrupled its viewing figures when it followed the Woodward trial.

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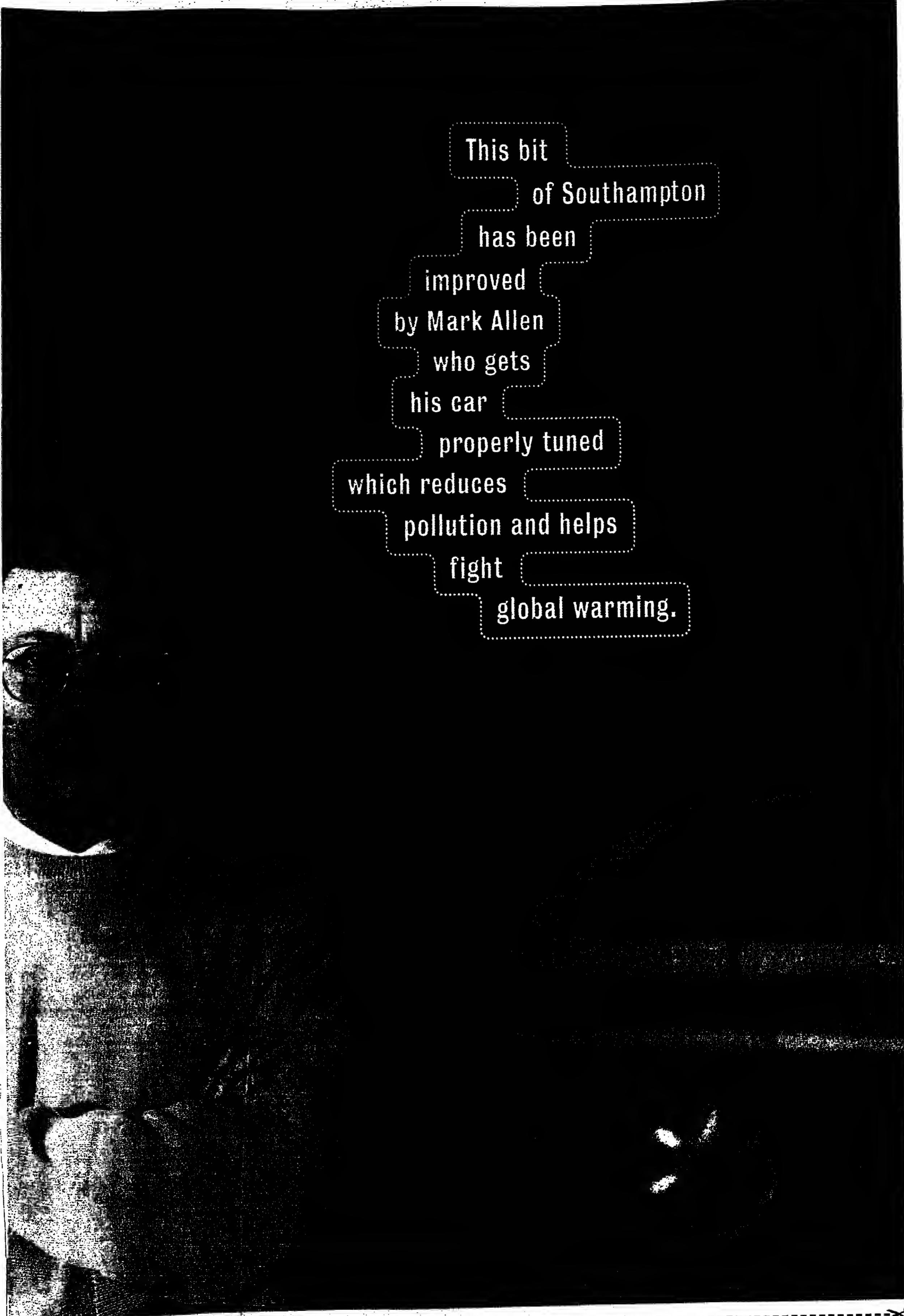
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Clinton plays for time over Monica

WASHINGTON'S Bill and Monica show could run and run, it emerged yesterday, outlasting Mr Clinton's presidency and giving the independent prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, the sort of job security his peers could only dream of.

The prospect that the investigation into President Clinton's relationship with the White House trainee Monica Lewinsky might not be concluded as envisaged in the next few weeks was raised by the President's controversial decision to invoke "executive privilege" to shield conversations with aides.

Mr Clinton's legal team confirmed at the weekend that they were invoking executive privilege to excuse members of the President's team from answering certain questions in the Monica Lewinsky case.

The plea involved two of Mr Clinton's closest aides: Bruce Lindsey, his long-time associate and deputy legal adviser, and the White House media guru Sidney Blumenthal. Both aides have already testified before the investigation, but both were expected to be recalled for further questioning. Yesterday however, a further scheduled appearance by Mr Blumenthal was postponed indefinitely.

Initially, Mr Clinton's decision to invoke executive privilege was seen as politically questionable. "Executive privilege" has had negative connotations ever since it was invoked by Richard Nixon during Watergate to keep his Oval Office tapes out of the investigation. He fought right up to the Supreme Court to keep the tapes private, lost, and the rest is history.

Since then, the whole concept of executive privilege has been commonly disparaged as an undignified means for a president to evade the law.

In Mr Clinton's case, the suspicion is that he may be trying to use a legal provision designed to protect national security to protect his own personal privacy or - worse - to avoid a perjury charge.

This could follow if the in-

vestigation turned up evidence that he had lied under oath about the nature of his relationship with Ms Lewinsky.

However, one leading constitutional lawyer, Peter Shane of Pittsburgh University's law school, told the *New York Times* that apparent public support for Mr Clinton's right to keep his sex life private contrasted with public distaste for the cover-up of the Watergate burglary. The political liability might therefore have been exaggerated.

Others noted that what little Mr Clinton might have lost politically, he had gained massively in time. If the question of his right to claim executive privilege was challenged by Mr Starr, and went through the courts, there could be a delay of months, a year, or more.

A further factor could be the likely claim of executive privilege for Hillary Clinton, to cover conversations that she might have had with the two named advisers. The legal battle over the first lady's right to be covered by executive privilege could last even longer.

Meanwhile the investigation of the Lewinsky case would stall and it would become increasingly difficult to reconstruct a paper trail of deception in the White House - even if one existed.

Drawing out the case like this carries a price, not so much for Mr Clinton, as for the Vice-President, Al Gore. If the investigation were to drag on into the next presidential campaign, Mr Gore's association with the Clinton White House could prove an electoral liability.

President Bill Clinton yesterday met the 'twin prince' of the 'new generation' of African leaders. Second only to President Nelson Mandela to an admiring West, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who took power by force in 1986, likes to think of himself as the Bismarck of Africa. He hopes Mr Clinton's Africa tour will make the international community take Uganda, showing one of the highest rates of growth in Africa, more seriously.

He must have been dis-

mayed then by yesterday's press conference with Mr Clinton in Kampala, as US correspon-

14/FOREIGN



Welcome to Africa: Children dancing for President Bill Clinton in Uganda

Photograph: Reuters

Scandal clouds visit to Museveni

By Mary Braid
in Accra

President Bill Clinton yesterday met the 'twin prince' of the 'new generation' of African leaders. Second only to President Nelson Mandela to an admiring West, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who took power by force in 1986, likes to think of himself as the Bismarck of Africa. He hopes Mr Clinton's Africa tour will make the international community take Uganda, showing one of the highest rates of growth in Africa, more seriously.

He must have been dis-

mayed then by yesterday's press conference with Mr Clinton in Kampala, as US correspon-

dents focused on the sex and perjury claims swirling around Mr Clinton. Not as much as a polite inquiry was made about Uganda's problems or aspirations. Like Ghana's president, Jerry Rawlings, the first African leader to welcome Mr Clinton, Mr Museveni is a darling of the World Bank and IMF. He brought peace and economic growth to Uganda, left in ruins by the excesses of former presidents Idi Amin and Milton Obote. But he has taken fewer steps towards democracy than Mr Rawlings, former coup leader turned elected president. Uganda espouses a 'no-party democracy': there are opposition parties and a free press but they cannot contest

community seems prepared to buy Mr Museveni's case. Uganda's opposition newspapers yesterday accused Mr Clinton of backing the authoritarian regime.

Concerns about democracy extend to many of the leaders attending today's regional conference with the US president in Kampala. That helps make the visit to Uganda and Rwanda the trickiest part of the presidential tour, which will also take in South Africa, Botswana and Senegal. They may have become stable, but few operate Western-style democracies. But these days that appears to matter less to the West than good governance, stability and economic reform.



Museveni: No democrat

elections. Mr Museveni says Uganda will degenerate into tribal conflict in a multi-party system. After the violence of previous regimes and the return of stability, the international

Swiss try to avert bank sanctions

BERN, Switzerland (AP) - The Swiss government will send a representative to a New York meeting to try to avert any US sanctions against Swiss banks and insurers over the Holocaust, officials said yesterday.

Thomas Borer, head of

Switzerland's task force on the

Second World War, will join US

city and state officials in the

meeting called for tomorrow by

the New York City Comptroller

Alan Hevesi.

New York State and Califor-

nia are among several key

states that have threatened action

against the banks.

Last December the state

and city officials suspended ac-

tion for three months to see

what progress the Swiss would

make in righting any wrongs to

Holocaust victims or their heirs.

Switzerland's three leading

banks last week rejected as

"unwarranted and counterpro-

ductive" an ultimatum from

the California Treasurer Marti

Fong that they must reach a set-

tlement with Holocaust victims

by the end of the moratorium

or face a boycott.

Undersecretary of State Stu-

art Eizenstat, the top Clinton

administration official dealing

with the Nazi era, has opposed

the imposition of city and state

sanctions on Swiss banks. Mean-

while, political pressure is grow-

ing in Switzerland for

countermeasures against any

US sanctions.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi and Jose Ramos Horta

ASEM II - THE ALTERNATIVE STATE RECEPTION
FOR THE UNREPRESENTED PEOPLES OF ASIA

hosted by

Joanna Lumley

The Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1
6pm-10pm Thursday 2nd April 1998
Wine and canapes will be served

ASEM II in London on 3-4 April is a Heads of State meeting to promote trade and investment between Asia and Europe. Millions of people are suffering human rights abuses and oppression in Asia, yet they will have no voice at ASEM II. The Alternative State Reception will highlight these issues and give a voice to the Unrepresented Peoples of Asia. Guest speakers will include three Nobel Peace Prize winners: Jose Ramos Horta of East Timor and, on video, His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet and Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. Free Tibet Campaign, Burns Action Group, British Coalition for East Timor, Tapol, National Women's Network and the Philippine Rainbow Centre have worked together to organise this inspiring occasion for Peace, Freedom and Democracy.

Tickets are available for a minimum donation of £25. Donations to these non-profit making voluntary organisations will be gratefully received and used to support Peace, Freedom and Democracy. Telephone 0171 359 1753 for more information.

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لهم من لا يزال

Hollywood star gives hope to Tibetans

Peter Popham
sees Richard Gere
lend a sympathetic
ear at Delhi's
Speaker's Corner

RICHARD GERE descended on a dusty, fly-blown wedge of central Delhi on Monday to bestow his blessings on six very hungry Tibetans.

It's a place called Jantar Mantar and it is desperately in need of blessings of every kind. Marooned between the concrete towers of the city offices, a five-star hotel and a park, it is a concentration of Asian miseries and grievances of every description. The six Tibetans, fasting indefinitely in an attempt to goad the United Nations into taking action over their brutalized homeland, are just one fragment of it.

If you made Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park a permanent event and married it with a squatter's camp, you would end up with something like Jantar Mantar. Tents of PVC and sacking moored to railings occupy half the pavement. Office workers pick their way along the portion that remains while naked children play tag and mothers hang washing on lines strung between traffic signs. Six hundred people squat here. Sikh families whose homes were destroyed and lives threatened in the riots of 1984 followed that by the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

Further along the pavement is the saddest spot in Jantar Mantar: an elderly Tibetan woman called Sonam Dickey sits cross-legged with a portrait of her son, a musician, in her lap, tears coursing down her face. He was imprisoned by the Chinese for espionage, and is serving an 18-year prison term. "A MOTHER'S APPEAL" reads the sign behind her, asking for help to bring his release. "I would like to meet my son once before my death."

The Tibetans' hunger strike occupies a tent in what used to be the small public park here. The grass is all gone; all that is left is dust, flies and worms; some more hopeless than others. The walls of a shack are decorated with maps illustrating with arrows how the subcontinent should be unified. A long written screed painted on a board urges world government.

Taliban edict forces out UN

THE UN shut operations in southern Afghanistan following attacks on UN staff and an edict forcing foreign Muslim women working in Afghanistan to be accompanied by a close male relative. This is the first time the UN has taken such a drastic step in response to Afghanistan's Taliban army, which controls roughly 85 per cent of the country. — AP, Islamabad

East Europe hit by TB

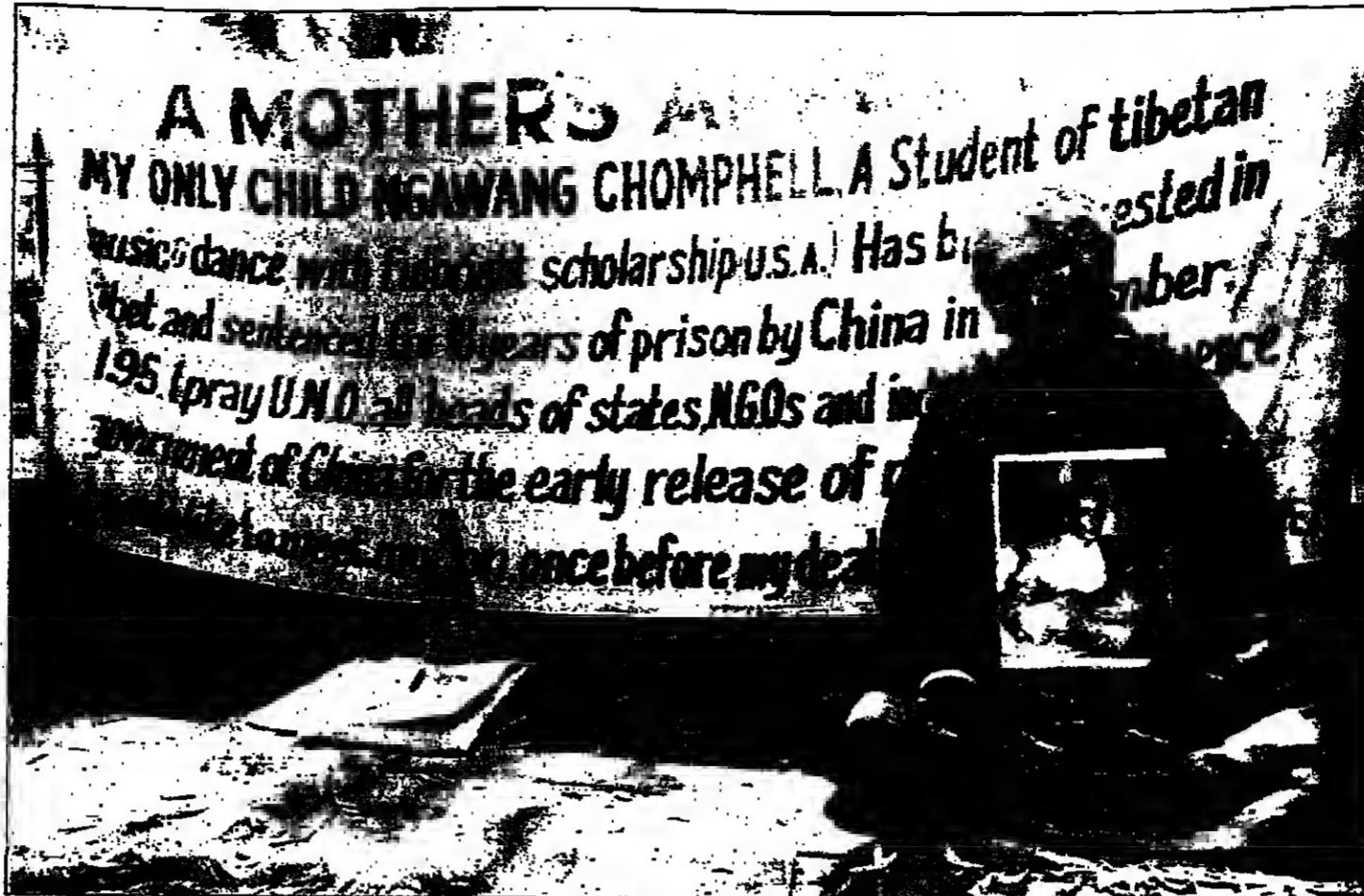
TB is increasing in Russia and Central and East Europe, the World Health Organisation said in a report released on World Tuberculosis Day. Cases rose by 25 per cent in 1996 compared with 1994. In Russia, with 111,000 cases, the rate was 75 cases per 100,000, compared with six per 100,000 in relatively unaffected Sweden. — Reuters, Copenhagen

Apes face fire extinction

THE UN Development Programme is to mobilise 1,000 volunteers to fight forest fires in Borneo that are threatening a national park. News reports said orangutans face extinction in the area because of fires and hunting. — AP, Jakarta

Snakes a lot

LAI authorities seized 4,000 live snakes packed into crates and shipped to China for use as food and medicine. They were rescued while the crates were being loaded into a plane. The snakes could have earned the smuggler as much as £20,000. Snakes are protected in Thailand. — AP, Bangkok



Protest: Sonam Dickey pleading in New Delhi for the release of her son, who is being held in a Tibetan prison. Photograph: Tenzin Dorjee

Buddhist monk's VIP treatment

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand's royal family has ordered the military to fly the country's most popular Buddhist monk to a Bangkok hospital for treatment of his heart ailment.

Luang Phor Khoon has been in hospital in the rural town of Nakhon Ratchasima, 130 miles north-east of Bangkok, since last Thursday.

Luang Phor Khoon has gained a wide following because people believe that if he hits them on the head with a rolled-up newspaper, they have a better chance of winning the state lottery.

The monk's blessing and endorsement is sought by many Thai politicians.

Doctors said that the monk would be flown by an army helicopter to Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok as soon as he was well enough to be moved.

Luang Phor Khoon was quoted in the Bangkok Post as saying that he wanted to live long enough to see the school and hospital projects that he is sponsoring completed.

"If I die now, nobody will carry on," the Post quoted the monk as saying. "So I will live."

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Royal Mail

Worth a trip to Ireland

Carlo Gebler agrees there are too many Irish versions of classic plays, writes Robert Hanks, but nowhere else would do for his production of 'The Dance of Death'

JUST what we need: another Irish version of a European classic. In recent years we have been offered Irish Sophocles, Irish Aeschylus, Irish Chekhov - what seems like an awful lot of Irish Chekhov - Irish Lorca and Irish Ibsen. Anybody who wants to foist an Irish Strindberg on a paying audience needs a pretty good excuse by now.

Carlo Gebler, whose version of *The Dance of Death* opens at the Tricycle Theatre next week, knows this perfectly well - when talk turns to the sheer volume of "Hibernised" classics he mutters "Disgusting, isn't it?", and he seems to mean it. Although, he says he admires Frank McGuinness's version of *Three Sisters*, for example, he is as unimpressed by Irishness as any Irishman can be, blaming the glut of Irish plays and adaptations we have seen in recent years on "the English lashing themselves for the

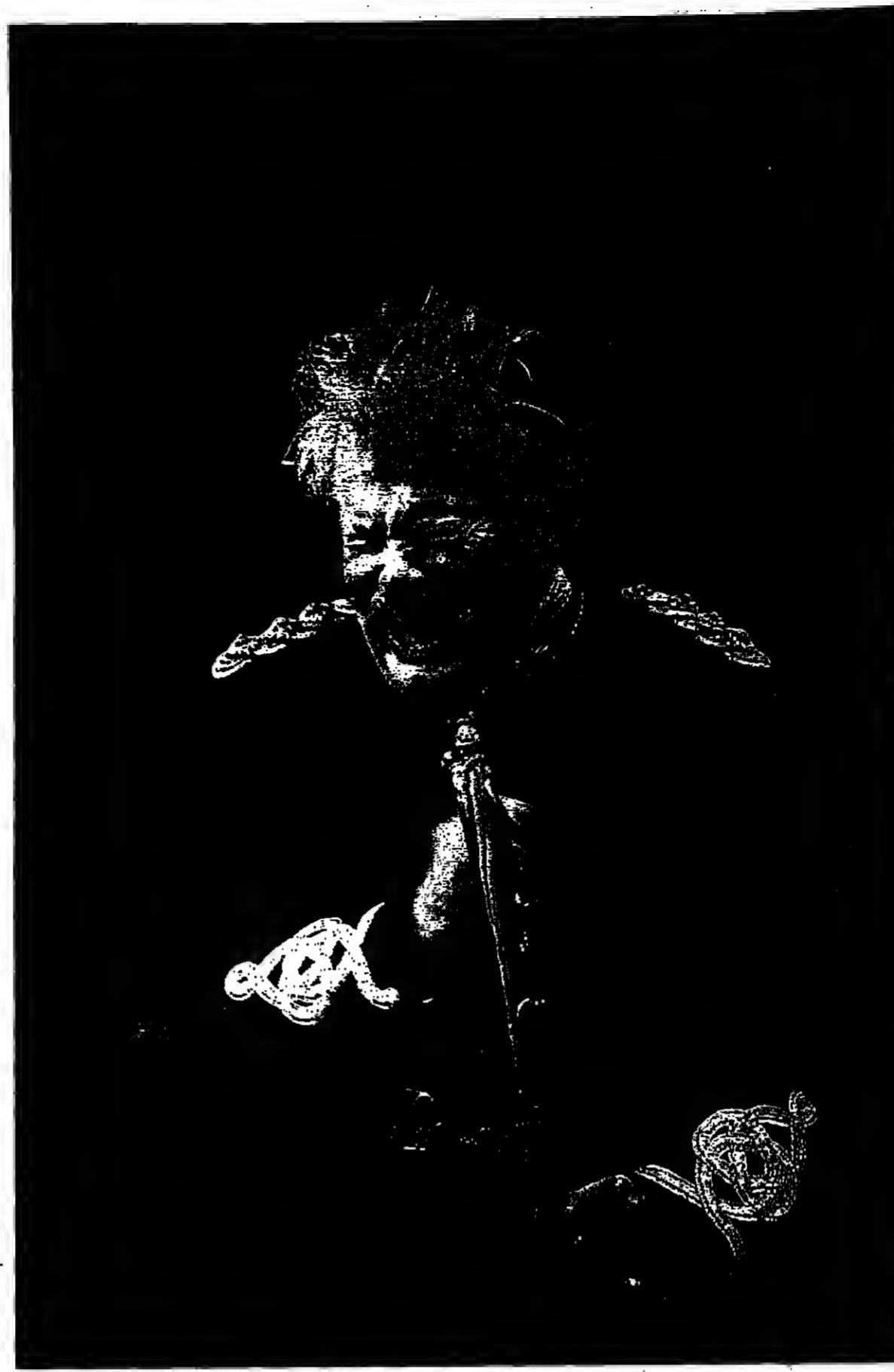
action on a garrison island off the Swedish coast, Gebler places it in a Martello tower, one of many built around the Irish coast in expectation of Napoleonic invasion; and there is an extravagance in the vicious, often hilariously black rhetoric that Strindberg's central characters, a superannuated captain and his wife, hurl at each other which suits Irish idioms better than it might suit a more restrained English version.

Gebler's version seems like a close reading of Strindberg, until you compare it with a more literal translation. His working practice was to read a couple of pages of the play in every translation he could get, then write down from memory what he thought happened. When he had been through the entire play like this, he compared his version with the Swedish original and found it was 4,000 to 5,000 words longer. So, he set about slashing every one of his sentences to the length of Strindberg's original ones, chucking out fidelity and occasionally comprehensibility in favour of pace.

On the page, the result works fine, at least in Part 1 (*The Dance of Death* is two plays, both of which are to be performed at the Tricycle - take a cushion). But you know what they say, "*Tradition traditio*": to translate is to betray. The problem facing the adaptor who takes a classic to Ireland is not simply what he loses, but what he might gain.

In the case of *The Dance of Death*, Gebler gains a whole new subtext about sectarian and national conflict. The Captain and his wife, Edgar and Alice, here become a mixed marriage - he is an impoverished Protestant, she is from a rather grander Catholic family; his quarrel with her cousin (Kurt in the original, here renamed Conor) takes on explicitly religious overtones. Gebler takes this theme even further by setting Part 1 in the summer of 1913, so that Part 2, which takes up the story two-and-a-half years later, coincides with the Easter Rising of 1916. Given the play's deeply personal nature - Strindberg based it, rather too obviously for comfort, on his sister and her husband - this political dimension may offend Strindberg purists. They may also be worried about the way Gebler plays up aspects of the story - notably a sub-plot about some shares.

Gebler himself has no doubt that he is serving the play: "I wanted to make the intrinsic qualities even stronger - I wanted to make it seem more what it was than it was at the moment, if that makes sense." In his view, making the marriage a mixed



High dudgeon: Michael Cochrane plays Gebler's Protestant Captain in 'The Dance of Death' at the Tricycle

one and making Kurt/Conor, a character Strindberg apparently identified with, a Catholic accentuates Strindberg's sense of being an outsider. Adding the Easter Rising emphasises the theme of betrayal (Coincidentally, this is the phrase Nicholas Kent used when rejecting a previous play of Gebler's - he clearly inherits his sunny temperament from his mother, novelist Edna O'Brien, who has never been famous for her optimistic world-view). He then wrote the marginally more cheerful Part 2 without re-reading what he had already done, adding some discrepancies (such as the Captain's sudden apparent affluence) which Gebler felt needed sorting out.

Has taking Strindberg to Ireland been worth the trip? Audiences can decide next

labor and friend, Emil Schering, who wrote back that no theatre would ever put it on because, in Gebler's phrase: "They would be slitting their wrists in the intermission." (Coincidentally, this is the phrase Nicholas Kent used when rejecting a previous play of Gebler's - he clearly inherits his sunny temperament from his mother, novelist Edna O'Brien, who has never been famous for her optimistic world-view). He then wrote the marginally more cheerful Part 2 without re-reading what he had already done, adding some discrepancies (such as the Captain's sudden apparent affluence) which Gebler felt needed sorting out.

Tuesday, Gebler himself has no doubt that his changes help to keep the action moving smoothly. Strindberg himself would have approved: "The thing to remember about Strindberg," according to Gebler, "is that, although a writer, he was very, very practical. His ideas and I share his sentiments; if they're going to come in, they're going to pay money, they're going to sit for a couple of hours, they could be doing something much, much better - give them a damn good time."

The Dance of Death, Parts 1 and 2, opens on Tuesday 31 March at the Tricycle Theatre, London NW6 (0171 328 1000). Carlo Gebler's novel 'How to Murder a Man' is published next week by Little, Brown.

Long time waiting for a dry debate

Prowse fails to live up to over-excited expectations of European drama, says Sue Wilson

In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields/The Dying Gaul/The Millionairess, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow
WITH PATRICE Chereau's 1995 production of Bernard-Marie Koltes's *Dans La Solitude des Champs de Coton* still vivid in theatre-going memory as one of the Edinburgh Festival's all-time highlights, expectations of Philip Prowse's new English-language production - given the Citz's long and honourable track-record of staging European drama - were running high.

That anticipation (for those few who were party to the facts prior to finding the apologies slip in their programmes on opening night) was decidedly muddled, however, by the discovery that Prowse and company were working from the wrong script, namely a translation unauthorised by Koltes's estate, rather than the official version by Jeffrey Wainwright, who - then in blissful ignorance of the substitution - wrote about the play in *The Independent* a couple of weeks ago.

Several days' increasingly frantic negotiations between the theatre and Koltes's agent and executors, including talk of an injunction to prevent the play opening, resulted in the aforementioned apology to all concerned (though not in explanation of exactly how such a fundamental error occurred), with the show - "a production based on work done by the company on a translation by Christopher Rathbone" - duly going on. Perhaps the best outcome to be looked for in such circumstances would be a triumph for Prowse's version, but unfortunately it proved to be about as much of a damp squib as Koltes's extraordinary verbal architecture allows.

The sheer fiendishly loaded glory of Koltes's language, in this emblematically metaphysical tale of Dealer and Client meeting in some twilight urban netherworld, of itself supplies superabundant material fodder to sustain the piece's hour-long duration, with its intricate, adamanian, scalpel-sharp probings of the symbioses between desire, need, power, fear, gratification and morality. However, Prowse's direction - deliberately, one presumes - brings almost nothing extra to the text, apart from a stylish upside-down design with both Andrew Joseph's and Robert David MacDonald's performances characterised by a near-total dearth of expressive inflection reducing the tone of the drama to little more than dry intellectual debate, the pair's frequent fluffs and stumbles over lines puncturing the necessary tension still further.

Thankfully, things improved considerably over the next two nights, in the latest instalment of a season that certainly highlights the consistently ambitious sweep of the Citz's work. Contemporary American drama was upped, with the world premiere of Craig Lucas's latest play looking to build on the reputation established by previous works such as *Prelude to a Kiss* and *Longitude Companion*.

The Mamet-tinged story of a young screenwriter, Robert (Stephen Scott), seeking to commemorate his recently dead lover by making the (eponymous) movie they worked on together, it touches deftly on a whole cluster of contemporary preoccupations: Cyber-communication, psychotherapy, AIDS, the existence of angels, Buddhist philosophy and the legacy of the Holocaust all surface against the duplicitous machinations of the film industry, embodied by the Mephistophelian figure of Jeffrey (Henry Ian Cusick), the film's chillingly amoral producer. While a number of alarmingly creaky plot-hinges are required to encompass this little lot, a compellingly realised trio of central performances - including Lorraine McDevitt as Jeffrey's shrewd but emotionally adrift wife Elaine - provide a vibrant human core to the action, enabling most of its densely compacted themes to breathe with gripping resonance.

And finally, in the main house, a rare revival for Shaw's late comedy of money and (ill) manners, staged with wonderful grit and panache by director Giles Harland, amid Kenny Miller's airy elegance. Anne Myatt stars as Epiphany, the obstreperous middle-aged heiress of thistle, simultaneously waging war on her estranged playboy-sportsman husband while trying - if only half-consciously - to find an outlet for her formidable passions and energies in a society still decidedly uncomfortable with women of independent minds and means.

While the gradual shift from Cowdray-esque barbed badinage towards weightier ideological concerns, dissecting the relations between class, capital, power and labor, does grind its gears at times, the dialog's reliable pithiness and expertly maintained pitch, between character-realism and camp, cutting satire, keeps things flowing at a cracking, crackling pace, boosted by performances all round of equal poise, vigour and flourish.

All running until 4 April. Bookings on 011 429 0022.



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Educated Rita's older sister learns to speak for herself



Retallack re-tells Wesker's story of the awakening of an independent female spirit

really feel that these people have a lifetime of shared memories, subterranean veins of humour and affection running through the block of their stupidity. Their existence may be mind-numbing, incurious and repetitive but we see that there are saving graces.

Sally Mates is superb as the mother, the sad, doomed attempt to establish some intimacy with her runaway daughter and then the ugly triumphalism - the product of years of being cooped up and codescendant to - when Ronnie writes to break

off with Beatie. Ms Mates induces audience empathy with this woman, even as you deplore her tactics.

A play about the awakening of an independent female spirit, *Rita* has echoes of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, in the defiant solo dance at the end of Act One, and pre-echoes of *Educated Rita*, in the resilient humour and inquisitiveness of its heroine.

Retallack stages the moment at the end when the beleaguered Beatie suddenly stops parroting Ronnie and finds her own voice ("I'm be-

ginning... I'm beginning!") in a manner that is wonderfully true to its mix of realism and romanticism. A screen drops between Beatie and her family at the aborted tea party, leaving her alone in a vast black and white projection of lonely Norfolk landscape, stretches flat and bare under a lowering sky. A new, difficult start and an image that is rightly both embarrassing and uplifting, gauche and glorious.

Paul Taylor

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Long time
waiting
for a dry
debate

Sue Wilson

In the Solitude of the Cosmetic
Drama Gant The Millions
Theatre Glasgow

1998

The vegetables in your Sunday lunch should worry you as much as the beef, says Rose Prince



Demand for out-of-season vegetables is making farmers use more chemicals on land to promote growth. Ian Nelson (below) believes organic methods are better for customers and for business

Photograph below: Mike Walker

WE WORRY about meat. We think about how much we eat and whether it affects our health, where it comes from and how it was grown; we despair of the industry that supplies it and some of us worry that we ourselves demanded too much of that industry, forcing it into unorthodox production methods in order to supply the demands of millions for a beef burger a day. And all the time we worry and fret about evidence being given to the current BSE public inquiry, directives are given by the medical profession, the Department of Health and the vegetarian lobby to eat plenty of vegetables.

Those of us concerned about our health are eating our greens. Lots of them. We are quite hooked on them now – and anyone who picks up a modern cookbook or eats out regularly is discovering that there are hundreds of varieties out there. Retailers are bending over backwards to supply them – all year round and cheaply, of course, because we hate paying for vegetables and feel affronted if our produce hill comes near that for meat or fish.

But look closer at the industry that is making sure that we feel good about ourselves and the way we are treating our bodies and there is an uncomfortable feeling that our good intentions are harmful – to our health, our land and the industry itself. Visit any supermarket and you will find a huge and eclectic range of produce. One Waitrose store boasted 17 species of potato, ten of mushrooms and every conceivable type of edible root, squashes and onions, mange tout and courgettes, dozens of lettuces – or salad leaves as they are now known – and the exotic pak choi, seaweed and water chestnuts. In total 125 varieties; very few of them in season and most are imports.

Alan Wilson, Waitrose's agronomist

says: "Now the consumer is more city based they have come to expect things like asparagus to be available all year round." While he feels Waitrose are obliged to offer choice to the better-travelled customer, he admits, that doing so increased the store's profitability.

The trouble is that if the consumer chooses to eat certain vegetables out of season, the produce must be chemically altered in some way to encourage growth outside that season. If it cannot be done, those vegetables have to be imported. Many of the pesticides and fertilisers used on crops are not safe if the clearance period, (that is the time between spraying and being put on a shop shelf) is not long enough. There is no enforced regulation in the business to ensure that this is not the case.

Intensive farming and its use of chemicals has long been suspected as being at the heart of many allergy-related and some neurological diseases. Heavy use of chemicals in agriculture has led to soil becoming merely a holding material for seedlings and whatever growth-enhancers the farmer uses. Intensive farming also has a weak reputation in business ethics. Use of

gang work forces is not unusual in Kent and East Anglia. Teams of workers – many of them immigrants – working for below the minimum wage set by the Agriculture Wages Board are brought in for harvesting.

Alan Wilson does not believe the practice is widespread. All of Waitrose's farm workers are full-time and they have a history of clean employee-employer practice. He says that British vegetable

farming "is a little too intensive", and, recognising the public's loss of confidence, the supermarket has added organic vegetables to their shelves. Not many – out of the 125 vegetables previously mentioned, only 16 were organically grown.

Before all the blame is laid at the feet of the growers, note that it is the supermarkets who are the main, sometimes sole, client of the big firms. One farmer, who did not want to be named, said: "If the

client want their spring greens a week early, the grower is unlikely to mention that they were only sprayed with a pesticide last week and that there ought to be a long abatement period before cutting. He cuts and sells rather than losing business."

Many consumers, particularly those who are town and city-based, are ignorant of growing seasons and never stop to wonder where their beloved tough little green beans are growing in the winter.

So it is well-meaning veg lovers who are putting the whole industry under intense pressure to satisfy, at all costs, our desire to cook and eat whatever and as much as we desire. It is quite common in restaurants as well as in British home cooking to find half a dozen different vegetables accompanying the roast meal, regardless of whether they are a happy composition for that dish. Restaurants often serve them in a separate little dish as if to say "look – we tried hard with the vegetables," confusing the diner who wonders if they should transfer the lukewarm mange tout, broccoli and two types of potato to their plate or eat them straight off the serving dish. "Meat and two veg" is a thing of the past, now we have

"meat with six out-of-season imports." One man with a different approach to growing and eating his greens is the organic farmer Ian Nelson. Sunnyfield's, his farm on the south coast near Southampton, has had Soil Association approval for 11 years. Eight years ago Nelson took it over. He was initially trained in agriculture and horticulture. He took his knowledge to Malawi in Africa on a Voluntary Services Overseas project, showing the farmers there how to increase yields and lessen the probability of losing crops through pest invasion. The VSO project was successful, but returning home was Nelson's "road to Damascus"; he was appalled that here similar methods of growing should be employed when the British people were in no way hungry.

He is anxious to get across that he is "not a hippy". He says: "If you try to dominate nature rather than stay within its confines it will have fatal consequences." Over the year 150 varieties of produce are grown at Sunnyfields – everything from roots and onions to the more exotic red chard.

He believes that where possible we should seek out superior tasting naturally grown vegetables, eat them discriminatingly and pay more. Nelson's customers are happy to shell out for organic, believing a superior product can stand alone as a dish. "We put the finest oil in our cars, why not a similar grade fuel for our bodies?" he asks.

"We have to learn from the disaster in beef farming. Mass-production stresses and strains an industry often with catastrophic consequences realised too late. A tempered, less ardent course in buying and eating our food could be preventative without a change of quality in our lives."



There's a difference between meddling and muddling

THERE are some allegations about politicians to which the only reaction can be: is he really that stupid?

Into this category falls the claim that Tony Blair last week lobbied his Italian counterpart on behalf of Rupert Murdoch's £4bn attempt to buy the Berlusconi television empire.

Mr Blair's desire to keep on the right side of the owner of the *Sun* is well known. But to intervene so soon after Mr Murdoch's recent gracing of the front pages? That would display as much acumen as the BBC offering Messrs Hall and Shepherd a consultancy on *Match Of The Day* after the Newcastle fiasco.

"It was Prodi who called Blair," a Downing Street spokesman is said to have snarled, "the case falls at the first hurdle." And maybe it does. But about Tony Blair's bankrollings to meddle in industry, the case is rather stronger.

From the moment he became Labour leader four years ago, he has courted businessmen, and understandably so. Nothing would help exorcise memories of bad Old Labour, and its knee-jerk hostility to enterprise, than their support.

Successful industrialists also were by definition dynamic, and, increasingly, classless – the very image of Blair's New Britain. And it is an affair not just of the head, but of the heart, boro perhaps of naivete, perhaps of the instinctive affinity of members of the high achievers club, perhaps even of the romantic notion that in mutual admiration's golden glow, all Britain's ills would vanish.

That philosophy was most visible in the recent SmithKline Beecham/Glaxo affair.

There is little doubt that Downing Street encouraged the proposed merger, in the belief that if SKB carried out an earlier plan to link with a US competitor, it would be lost to America. Far better to endow



Just how good is Tony Blair at wooing industry?

Photograph: Brian Harris

Britain with a mighty drugs company that would dwarf its international competitors, Sir Richard Sykes of Glaxo contended. And not surprisingly, Mr Blair agreed. Good for Labour, he must have thought, and good for the country.

Of course, none of this is exactly new.

Thirty years ago, another

Tony Blair's interest in industry has grown since May, indeed, he shows signs of wanting not just to encourage it, but to shape it

Labour Prime Minister was to be kept on board (though in the end he jumped ship spectacularly). Thanks to globalisation, King's counterpart today comes from Australia, and carries a US passport (and may one day jump ship too).

But is it necessarily good for Labour, let alone Britain? The

spectacle of politicians cosying up to businessmen raises three separate problems.

The first is that malign interest of fundraising and influence-buying. Bernie Ecclestone's £1m donation to the Labour party "co-incided," as they say, with a notable change of Labour policy on tobacco advertising in Formula One. Then there is the age-old pitfall of cronyism.

Governments are not elected to favour one company among many, nor to give a particular entrepreneur the inside track over his rivals. Their job is to create a benign and equal environment for all.

Let the public sector use the skills and experience of businesses by all means, and this Government has done so more than most, but not if, for argument's sake, the presence of Martin Taylor of Barclays at the head of the tax-and-benefits task force were to see any future merger of Barclays and NatWest judged not on its merits, but on the man.

And finally, even in this era of globalisation and the single currency, size may not be everything.

Mr Blair may think so. But perhaps not his Chancellor, and certainly not Mrs Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, known in the City as "Mrs Block-It" for her habit of referring every deal in sight to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

She believes that competition, at least as much as the huge economies of scale generated by oligopolistic megacorporations, produces the best deal for consumers.

The argument is open. It

could yet contain the seeds of ruinous internal strife for Labour if its industrial policy goes wrong.

But there is one consolation.

Labour had to give back

Bernie Ecclestone's £1m.

BT's promise of the Internet in

every classroom has not come to

pass.

The merger of SmithKline

and Glaxo fell through, and Rupert Murdoch isn't going to be an Italian TV network.

If this really was the Bank of Great Britain PLC, and Tony Blair its Chief Executive, he would long since have picked up his golden severance cheque.

– Rupert Cornwell

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The oval roaster also has a dual purpose lid which can be used as an attractive serving dish. These traditional roasters will look stylish in any kitchen and are dishwasher safe and easy to clean.



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18/THE OSCARS

And the best-dressed actress award goes to...

The Oscars ceremony has become one of the biggest nights out, not for the stars and the silver screen but for the fashion industry.

Getting your dress on the backs of those stars is one of the greatest publicity stunts possible. Money cannot buy the sort of personal endorsement a star like Kate Winslet or Madonna gives when they are snapped by the world's cameras. And on Monday night the four British actresses nominated might not have won anything, but some of our fashion stars came out with flying colours. Alexander McQueen for one. His was the coup of the night: a dragonfly embroidered gown by the designer for Givenchy. And Nicole Farhi scored her first ever Oscar coup and should sign Judi Dench up for the next advertising campaign immediately. John Galliano dressed Cameron Diaz under his Dior label.

So forget acting ability. All we were really interested in was the frocks, in the greatest catwalk show of all.

Tamsin Blanchard and Melanie Rickey nominate the most glamorous night's winners and the losers



Kate Winslet in Alexander McQueen for Givenchy. Full marks for supporting a British fashion export and putting her faith in a young designer. Kate went for a fitting for her deep sea-green gown with matching bolero with dragonflies and weeping willow branches, hand-embroidered in silk thread and crystals on the morning of McQueen's show for Givenchy two weeks ago. The final fittings were when the dress, the actress and the seamstresses came to McQueen's east London studio. Ms Winslet, who wore Vivienne Westwood to last year's Academy Awards, agreed to wear Givenchy on the understanding that the house did not make a dress for any other Oscar nominee. It fitted her immaculately. The glass-beaded bag by Antonio Miranda and shoes in embroidered silk matched.



Julie Christie had been for fittings with John Galliano but opted at the last minute for this silver spider-web crystal beaded lace dress by New York duo Badgley Mischka. The skirt has a hand-painted hem and is an adaptation of a dress from the pair's autumn/winter '98 collection. If Oscar night was a competition of style, Christie, 58, won hands down.



Judi Dench wore a silver grey organza slip and organza coat by Nicole Farhi. The Dame met the designer through Ms Farhi's husband, the playwright David Hare. Dench is currently starring in his play, "Amy's View". The 63-year-old star looked fabulously understated and elegant and avoided the mutton-dressed-as-lamb syndrome successfully. She also avoided the "everything-but-the-kitchen-sink" school of Oscar dressing. Full marks all round; every inch the star.



Jen Hunt wore an ice blue bustier dress Gucci. The colour was fresh and cool, though it crinkled a lot. Previously, Hunt is seen a fan of Isaac Mizrahi but the American designer's office denied the dress was his. "It would have fitted a lot better if it had been by Mizrahi," they say.



Kim Basinger wore a pistachio satin gown by Brian Rennie of German label Escada Couture, and ended up looking like a female version of the Oscar statuette. All the illusions of her femme fatale image in "LA Confidential" were shattered in one lumpy, ill-fitting frump frock.



Sharon Stone attended the ceremony wearing every Hollywood movie star's favourite, Vera Wang. Her casual elegance shone out - how clever to wear a crisp white shirt wrapped insouciantly into a duchess satin evening skirt. Daring too, to reveal all that cleavage.



Minnie Driver. The dress was fine. But why oh why, on a warm Hollywood night, does anyone need to wrap a fox fur round her shoulders? Versace must accept responsibility.



Helena Bonham Carter typically wore a dress without a designer label. It was a one-off from a costume-makers. She always looks painfully thin and this dress was hanging off her. But it had a certain fragile Audrey Hepburn-style charm and she looked comfortable too.



Cher. The singer/actress has already gone down in the annals of Oscar-night mistakes but this one was a real corker. Imagine. You spend all that money on cosmetic surgery and hairpieces and you plonk a piñata hat on top of it all!

Night when *Titanic*, not Britannia, ruled the waves

TERSELY worded diplomatic note to the Academy may in order after this year's Oscars - perhaps delivered from culture minister Chris Smith, via promised new British film office in Los Angeles. The collection snub handed to Britain's actresses was surely a disaster of the cheapest American snobism. And *The Full Monty*, drowning by *Titanic*, with an Oscar for best score, was truly less than satisfactory.

A major crisis was only narrowly averted by Helen Hunt, American who took the best actress Oscar from under the nose of the four British nominees. The first time she saw *Helen Hunt's Mrs Brown*, she insisted she was convinced Dame Judi Dench would get the Academy Award. "And in my mind right she has," she said. "And as Julie Christie, and so has Helena Bonham Carter, and so Kate Winslet."

The full strangeness of the night was on display on Monday night, when stretch limousines, their televisions aglow but

occupants otherwise invisible, crowded the streets of South Central around the Shrine Auditorium. It is the night, after all, when people who dress up and pretend for a living do their best to persuade a world audience that they are, by turns, tearful, ecstatic and lost for words.

In the end, *Titanic*'s night of triumph fell strangely flat, though the film dominated the evening from the moment presenter Billy Crystal sank to the stage on a giant float. "What a shock," said Madonna, dryly summing up the mood as she announced that "My Heart Will Go On", the theme tune sung by Celine Dion, which has been virtually inescapable in America this spring, had won best original song.

Titanic scooped 11 of 17 possible Oscars, tying Ben Hur's record, and including one for Briton Peter Lamont, for art direction. As predicted, it cleaned up the production and technical awards and delivered two statuettes to director James Cameron, for best director and best editing and one for pro-

duced late in the game as the favourite for the comedy *As Good as It Gets* opposite Jack Palance, who took the Best Actor award.

British losers were gracious in defeat. Kate Winslet declared she was "not in the slightest" disappointed, though it is the second time - after her nomination for *Sense and Sensibility* - that Oscar has escaped her. "I'm just thrilled to be here," said Dame Judi, who won the Golden Globe that often signals Oscar success. "I have seen people I have only ever seen on the screen."

The Full Monty, with four nominations, was never favourite for best picture or best director, while a plagiarism suit, whatever its merits, may have hurt the chances of Simon Beaufoy for winning best screenplay. Only Anne Dudley, the composer, won an Oscar. "I think Hollywood really liked this movie, but they couldn't bring themselves to give it best picture with *Titanic* in the ring," she said. "I think they wanted to give it something and I was there."

It was any consolation to

Winners of the 70th Academy Awards

Best picture: "Titanic" (20th Century Fox/Paramount)	Best documentary feature: "The Long Way Home," Rabbi Marvin Hier and Richard Trank
Best performance by an actor in a leading role: Jack Palance in "As Good as It Gets" (TriStar)	Best achievement in visual effects: "Titanic," Robert Legato, Mark Lasoff, Thomas L. Fisher and Michael Kanter
Best performance by an actress in a leading role: Helen Hunt in "As Good as It Gets" (TriStar)	Best achievement in sound: "Titanic," Gary Rydstrom, Tom Johnson, Gary Summers and Mark Ulano
Best director: James Cameron, "Titanic" (20th Century Fox/Paramount)	Best achievement in sound effects editing: "Titanic," Tom Bellfort and Christopher Boyes
Best performance by an actor in a supporting role: Kim Basinger in "L.A. Confidential" (Warner Bros.)	Best film editing: "Titanic," Conrad Buff, James Cameron and Richard A. Harris
Best achievement in art direction: "Titanic," Art director Peter Lamont, Set direction Michael Ford	Best original dramatic score: "Titanic," James Horner
Best achievement in costume design: "Titanic," Deborah L. Scott	Best original musical or comedy score: "The Full Monty," Anne Dudley
Best make-up: "Men in Black," Rick Baker and David LeRoy Anderson	Best original song: "My Heart Will Go On" from "Titanic," James Horner and Will Jennings
Best live action short film: "Vice and Virtue," Chris Tashima and Chris Doran	Best foreign language film: "Characar," The Netherlands (A First Floor Features production)
Best animated short film: "Geri's Game," Jan Pinkava	Best adapted screenplay: "L.A. Confidential," Brian Helgeland and Curtis Hanson
Best documentary short subject: "A Story of Healing," Donna Dewey and Carol Patterson	Best achievement in cinematography: "Titanic," Russell Carpenter

19/OBITUARIES

Professor Sir Derek Barton

THE NOBEL Laureate Sir Derek Barton's published scientific works in organic chemistry spanned 58 years and ranged over vast areas of the subject. He was one of the greatest chemists of this century.

Unlike most scientists who prefer to remain as specialists, Barton had a mastery of both physical and organic chemistry and a breadth of interests which enabled him to turn to new fields, moving between topics, using the information gained from one study and then applying it to another, and then returning with more new ideas to the first. The areas which he left behind were always, of course, well ploughed by others.

He considered originality to be the most important quality. His advice to young scientists was simply stated: "If you know, in the academic world, how to do a reaction you should not do it. You should only work on reactions that are potentially important and that you do not know how to do."

Barton was educated at Tonbridge School in Kent, and, after deciding that he did not want to follow his father into the family carpentry business, he enrolled to read Chemistry at Imperial College, London, because "the fees were higher and therefore it had to be better". He was awarded the top first class honours BSc in 1940 and completed his PhD studies some two years later with Professor Sir Ian Heilbron. From 1942 to 1944, he was employed in secret wartime research and liked to hint that he developed a new range of invisibleinks for use on human skin.

He was married in 1944 to Jeanne Wilkins and, after one year in the chemical industry with Albright and Wilson in Birmingham, he returned to Imperial College as assistant lecturer. To his dismay, he was required to teach, not as an or-

ganic chemist but in the more mathematical realms of physical chemistry. This was soon to prove a blessing in disguise when, in 1948, during the tenure of an ICI Research Fellowship, he published calculations on the preferred three-dimensional shape of an organic molecule.

His critical moment of insight came in the following year when he was a visiting lecturer at Harvard and attended a seminar in Professor Louis Fieser's group where discussions centred around unusual reactions of steroids. He disagreed with the conventional explanations, and recognised, because of his calculations, that there was an "obvious" relationship between the preferred shape of a molecule and its reactivity. His key paper on the subject, which came to be known as Conformational Analysis, was published in 1950 and led directly to the 1969 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, which he shared with the Norwegian physical chemist Odd Hassel.

On his return to the UK he moved to Birkbeck College, London, first as Reader and then, at the early age of 35, as Professor. In 1955, Barton was invited to become Regius Professor of Chemistry at Glasgow University, where space was at a premium and he was installed in a glass partitioned office within his own research laboratory. From this excellent viewpoint, frequent and silent forays were made into the surrounding laboratory to startle his co-workers and enquire after the results of "our latest experiment".

The stay in Glasgow lasted only 18 months, however. The sudden death of Professor A.E. Braude precipitated his recall to his Alma Mater, and he was then to remain at Imperial College, ultimately as Hofmann Professor, for the next 20 years.

During the Fifties, he was also preoccupied with chican-



Barton, left, receiving the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in Oslo in 1969

Photograph: Hilton Getty

dating the detailed structure of natural products of plant and animal origin but he recognised the advent of new spectroscopic machines would soon make this a routine pursuit. He began to pursue "The Invention of New Chemical Reactions" as his intellectual challenge. These were to prove his preoccupation for almost another 40 years, and led to extraordinary productivity.

His original approach can be illustrated by a reaction now known as the Barton Nitrite Photolysis. It was unusual since it used light as the energy source at a time when most organic chemists were using heat,

and also remarkable because species called "free radicals" were involved, while the traditional organic synthesis of the day was firmly rooted in the use of positively and negatively charged intermediates. Most importantly, it provided a method for preparing the steroid adrenosterone at a time when the world supply from natural sources was only a few milligrams. The power of the new reaction was demonstrated at a lecture when Barton produced a bottle containing 60 grams of the steroid.

Free radicals were also used

in a theory called phenolic ox-

idative coupling which explained

that, since he did not wish to retire at 65, he would move to the village of Gif-sur-Yvette near Paris as Director of the Institut de Chimie des Substances Naturelles, a world-renowned centre-piece of the French CNRS research system. His selection of France was made, not only because of his love of fine French wines and cheeses, but also for his French second wife, Christiane Cognet, whom he had married in 1969.

In these "firsts" and a host of other areas such as fluorination, Vitamin D chemistry, or penicillins, Barton made major contributions which would be the single high point in the careers of most other organic chemists.

In the summer of 1977, Barton shocked the UK scientific

community by announcing that, while he did not wish to retire at 65, he would move to the village of Gif-sur-Yvette near Paris as Director of the Institut de Chimie des Substances Naturelles, a world-renowned centre-piece of the French CNRS research system. His selection of France was made, not only because of his love of fine French wines and cheeses, but also for his French second wife, Christiane Cognet, whom he had married in 1969.

In 1986, at the age of 68, and faced again by the prospect of an unwanted retirement, he made his final move and accepted an invitation to become Distinguished Professor of Chemistry at Texas A&M University, where he relished the competition of the American funding system.

This period also saw Barton begin to tackle his last great scientific challenge – the oxidation of saturated hydrocarbons. The problem here lies in converting basic petroleum products such as methane into feedstock for the fine chemical industry. Yet again, drawing inspiration from the chemical reactions occurring in nature, and thinking about the atmosphere of a primordial earth, he invented the Gif Oxidation, a combination of air, iron powder, hydrogen sulphide, vinegar and a dash of pyridine – and it worked.

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Barton liked to set himself new targets – and to meet them. One of these, made over 10 years ago, was to publish 1,000 research papers before the age of 80, and in this, he surpassed his goal: a remarkable achievement from a remarkable man.

sions were often conducted on a polite and formal level.

In social gatherings, too, he was a little uncomfortable and keen to escape. To those who knew him well however, and with whom he could relax, an entirely different personality was revealed. At these times, he had a great sense of fun loving to tell stories of people and places and revealing a surprisingly catholic range of interest in unsuspected areas such as literature and music. He was intensely proud of the world-wide family of his former colleagues and, as a "godfather", he always wished to help them.

Barton liked to set himself new targets – and to meet them. One of these, made over 10 years ago, was to publish 1,000 research papers before the age of 80, and in this, he surpassed his goal: a remarkable achievement from a remarkable man.

William B. Motherwell

Derek Harold Richard Barton, chemist: born Gravesend, Kent 8 September 1918; Assistant Lecturer, Department of Chemistry, Imperial College 1945-46; ICI Research Fellow 1946-49; Reader in Organic Chemistry, Birkbeck College 1950-53; Professor of Organic Chemistry 1953-55; FRS 1954; Regius Professor of Chemistry, Glasgow University 1955-57; FRSE 1956; Professor of Organic Chemistry, Imperial College 1957-70; Hoffmann Professor of Organic Chemistry 1970-78; Emeritus Professor of Organic Chemistry, London University 1978-98; Nobel Prize for Chemistry (jointly with Odd Hassel) 1969; Kt 1972; Director, Institut de Chimie des Substances Naturelles, CNRS 1977-85; Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, Texas A&M University 1986-95; Dow Distinguished Professor of Chemical Invention 1995-98; married 1944 Jeanne Wilkins (one son; marriage dissolved), 1969 Christiane Cognet (died 1992), 1993 Judith Cobb; died College Station, Texas 16 March 1998.

Museveni

Sir Matthew Campbell

Campbell: no nonsense

THE LAST Secretary of the old Department of Agriculture for Scotland who became the first head in 1962 of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Matthew Campbell was an austere and extremely competent civil servant. However, his claim to lasting fame was his work from 1951 to 1954 as Secretary of the Taylor Committee which created the Crofters' Commission.

Campbell worked well with Sir Thomas Murray Taylor, at that time the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Aberdeen University, a distinguished King's Counsel who had been asked by James Stuart, Churchill's incoming Secretary of State for Scotland, to chair an enquiry whose terms of reference were in review crofting conditions in the Highlands and Islands with special reference to the secure establishment of a smallholding population, making full use of agricultural resources and deriving the maximum economic benefit therefrom.

In a position of considerable power from 1953 until he retired in 1968, Campbell did more than anybody else to implement the recommendations of the Crofters' Commission which transformed the Highlands.

Matthew Campbell was born in High Blantyre into a family of teachers. He went to Hamilton Academy, then a famous scholarly school specialising in

Classics, and on to Glasgow University. Entering the Civil Service in 1928, he went first to the Inland Revenue and after a short spell at the Admiralty to the Department of Agriculture.

As a young MP, I marvelled

at how skilful the Department

of Agriculture was at getting a

huge share of public money out

of my first three Secretaries of

State: Jack Mackay, Michael Nohle and Willie Ross. If anybody could get money it was Campbell. Sir Alec Cairncross, one of the Government's most important post-war economic advisers, recalls his competence as a committee secretary and his subtle sense of humour. I believe it was an astute tolerance of the ridiculous that helped the somewhat formidable no-

nonsense Campbell to deal so effectively with the Highlanders, with whose real problems he had an innate sympathy.

The Taylor Committee found a great diversity of conditions: certain problems are common to all crofting communities, but outside the common area there are surprising differences between one district and another, and even between one adjacent island and another. At one end of the scale there are the moribund communities of the north-western seaboard, at the other the new and prosperous holdings in the Black Isle.

In some parts of the west of the old people, sole survivors of a once flourishing township, passed their declining years watching the tilled land going back to reeds and rushes, while in Orkney the virgin soil is being brought back under the plough at the rate of eight to nine hundred acres every year, and in Shetland young men back from the whaling in the Antarctic look in vain for holding in which they can make a home and settle down.

There is the island of Lewis, with poor peaty soil covering the Archaean Gneiss, with a crowded, lively, vital community, and the vast empty island of Mull with much better land and great areas of unstocked pasture.

Campbell wrote beautifully. The recommendations were constructive – a Crofters' Commission, responsible to the Secretary of State and endowed with adequate financial and executive powers; active use of land settlement powers in the crofting counties; the promotion

of land settlement schemes to

come within the purview of the

commission; notification of all vacancies in crofts and power

for the commission to ensure that crofts vacated and crofts falling vacant in the future were let in a way best calculated to promote the interests of the crofting community; discretionary power to terminate the tenancy of any crofting tenant who did not ordinarily reside on or within two miles of the holding; dispossession of an absentee tenant; houses occupied by old people who had few charters excused the valuation role; and power for the Crofters' Commission to frame a scheme for the reorganisation of any township which had fallen into decay.

Campbell's memorial is a Scottish Highlands with a new life breathed into it.

Tam Dalyell

Matthew Campbell, civil servant, born High Blantyre, Lanarkshire 23 May 1907; Principal, Department of Agriculture for Scotland 1938-43; Assistant Secretary 1943-53; Secretary 1953-58; Secretary 1958-62; Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland 1962-68; CB 1959; KBE 1963; married 1939 Isabella Wilson (died 1977; two sons); died Edinburgh 7 March 1998.

Guttsman: reticent

In his most recent researches, published in books and papers, he opened up a new aspect of art history. He combined his knowledge of German social democracy with his unrivalled knowledge of the visual arts (much of it ephemeral) that served left-wing political ends. It is an important contribution to the "New Art History", no longer restricted to the mere study of style and craftsmanship.

Guttsman had a passion for culture in the widest sense, but perhaps especially for the visual arts, including architecture. He provided crucial support in attempts to persuade the Senate of UEA to allocate funds for a collection of works of art, and heroically defended the university architect, Denys Lasdun, when lesser voices were raised in criticism. He collected works of art too, usually from artists he knew personally, selected with a discerning eye for quality.

Willi Guttsman and I had much in common – we went to the same school in Berlin, we both came to England as refugees from Germany before the Second World War, and we both loved the arts. However, it was not until I read an interview he gave in the *Eastern Daily Press* on the publication of his last book that I discovered that he had suffered in a concentration

camp before his parents managed to get an emigration visa for him to enter England, that he had lost both his parents in the Holocaust, and then, after arriving in England alone at the age of 16, been interned as an enemy alien and sent to Australia. He accepted these trials philosophically, without any bitterness.

His inborn reticence prevented discussion of such deeply personal matters. Even when, on rare occasions, I attempted to exchange a word or two in German, he never responded – indeed, when I met him by chance on the *S-bahn* in Berlin, where he was pursuing his researches for his last book, he replied in English.

It was only in that last book he allowed himself the revealing dedication "To Valerie and Jane". Willi Guttsman's pride in his wife's Lord Mayorship of Norwich and her contribution to the life of the city as a psychiatric social worker, and his daughter's professional success as a Reuter correspondent, typically remained unspoken.

Peter Lasko

William Leo Guttsman, librarian: born Berlin 23 August 1920; Chief Librarian, University of East Anglia 1964-85; married 1942 Valerie Lichtig (one daughter); died Norwich 12 February 1998.

BIRTHS

BARNES On 21 March, to Jeremy and Camilla (née Vignoles), a son, Oscar Barnardo Barnes, a brother for Sophie and Sophie.

KING To Anthony and Brenda, a daughter, Megan, on 24 March 1998. All love and best wishes from Nanny and Grandad, Tony and Brenda King, and from the great-grandparents Eddie and Sheila King and Walter and Eileen D'Cruz.

DEATHS

COLLISON On 19 March, to Jeremy and Lucy, a son, Oliver, born 20 January 1998. Rest in peace.

JOHNSTON On 23 March, Kenneth Johnston, OC, dear husband of the late Priscilla Johnston and dear father of William, Catherine, Lucy and Sophie, of Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, and of Sophie, Daniel and Max, of Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire.

MCKEEHAN Kenneth Mackay, husband of Shandy Hall, Cawdor, on 22 March, after a short illness. Husband and wife, and Memorial service at Cawdor Parish Church Friday 27 March at 11am. Memorial service to be held

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

in due course. No flowers by request.

POOLE-WILSON On 22 March, Dennis Poole-Wilson CBE FRCR, aged 93 years. Widower of Monique, devoted father Nicholas and Philip, father-in-law of Rat and Mary and grandfather of Peter, Alexander, William, Michael and Odette, all born at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Funeral service at Berwick-upon-Tweed on 30 March, at 1pm. Private interment, Rat's grave, Highgate Cemetery, London.

Donations to Laurence Sterne Trust.

REGINA On 22 March, Dennis Poole-Wilson CBE FRCR, aged 93 years. Widower of Monique, devoted father Nicholas and Philip, father-in-law of Rat and Mary and grandfather of Peter, Alexander, William, Michael and Odette, all born at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Funeral service at Berwick-upon-Tweed on 30 March, at 1pm. Private interment, Rat's grave, Highgate Cemetery, London.

Donations to Laurence Sterne Trust.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS The Duke and Duchess of York, Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones, have announced their engagement. The Duke and Duchess will be married in the Chapel Royal, St James' Palace, on Saturday 17 October 1998.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment has changed its Colours.

ROYAL VISITORS The Queen and Prince Philip are to visit Northern Ireland on 27-28 March.

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Clinton's vision of a new Africa

WHEN Bill Clinton flies into Cape Town tomorrow to meet Nelson Mandela, two of the world's most charismatic statesmen will have the opportunity to examine one of the world's more intractable problems. How can we lift Africa from the bottom of the economic heap and liberate it from the violence, despotism and famine that have haunted it for too long? Both men share a vision of a new Africa. As President Clinton put it to his audience in Ghana: "One hundred years from now your grandchildren and mine will look back and say this was the beginning of an African Renaissance" - a resonant phrase borrowed from the ANC itself.

It may well take a century to see democratic lion-economies roaring out of Africa. Even so, for a continent that has long been written off as an economic and political basket-case it was a bold statement. What now must Clinton and the West - and Africans themselves - do to stimulate the re-birth of the continent?

The first thing is to recognise that Africa is not a homogenous mass. True there are still states where the familiar post-independence mix of one-partyism, endemic corruption and brutality retains its grip. But parts of Africa are emerging from this model as surely, painfully and slowly they escaped from colonialism. Cruel and capricious "presidents for life" like Amin of Uganda, Banda of Malawi and Mobutu of Zaire have gone. They were propped up by the West in the Cold War era when America's allies were chosen by their hostility to the Soviet Union and their willingness to do what the CIA wanted.

Africa is no longer used as a proxy battlefield by the old superpowers. Apartheid is over. The peoples of half of sub-Saharan Africa's 48 nations now chose their own governments. Old-style leaders like former President Nyerere of Tanzania and President Moi of Kenya want to resist what they call "Coca-Cola style democracy" being imposed on Africa. Quite right. When the British left behind Westminster-style parliaments complete with maces, speakers and wigs they did not long survive as more than dignified curiosities. There can be no question of imposing constitutions. Equally there can be no hiding behind one-partyism as the only way to manage ethnic conflict.

There are new and hopeful exemplars in Africa. It was no accident that Clinton chose to go to a country like Uganda. President Museveni does not run a Scandinavian-style perfect democratic regime. What he has worked for is to give his long-suffering people a degree of stability without resorting to the worst despotic excesses of his predecessors. In Uganda one sees the beginnings of the freedoms that ensure stability and a political system that accommodates ethnicity and does not exploit it - the rule of law, protection of minorities, freedom of the press and so on. Despite its move to multi-party democracy the intimidation witnessed in the recent elections shows that Kenya still falls far short of the progress of its smaller neighbour.

The Kenyan High Commissioner in London said on television that he didn't care that Clinton hadn't chosen to drop in on Nairobi. Don't you believe it. It hurts. What also hurts is the embargo or aid to Kenya. That is why it stands and should continue. It is also a reason why the West needs to turn its attention to the logical corollary of this approach and look at large scale debt cancellation for countries where the beginnings of good governance are providing the underpinnings for economic growth.

Far away from Gaborone, Cape Town and Kampala the West will soon have an opportunity to extend its initiative beyond pure diplomacy. Next month our own Gordon Brown will tell the World Bank/IMF summit in Washington, and the G7 meeting that follows it in Birmingham in May, about his proposal to relieve debt and poverty in Africa. It will involve transferring some of the burden of debt from those nations least able to bear it to the bigger developing economies. The West has demonstrated what can be done with political will when it came to assisting the economies of the former Soviet Union and, most recently, the far east. As of this week the serious debate on what can be done to help Africa has really begun. President Clinton must now match the excellent pace he has set in the diplomatic field and lead the West in lending urgency to rescuing a too-long neglected and misunderstood continent.

Blair the lobbyist?

ENFIN, un chef de gouvernement anglais qui parle le français! Mais rappellez-vous, nos chers français, ce que le petit caporal nous a appris: une nation de commerçants. Ce matin nous nous demandons: ce M Blair, est-il vraiment notre premier ministre ou... déguisé - un espèce de négociant, un agent d'influence étrangère, le délégué d'une société privée, l'entreprise internationale gérée par Rupert Murdoch.

Yet it's not the French who need to beware but the Italians. The Euro-lines buzz with reports that the British prime minister has been lobbying Romano Prodi on behalf of Murdoch Enterprises Inc. Could it be that Mr Blair is moonlighting as a lobbyist? There will be those, especially in France, who will say this is what British membership of the European Union amounts to. It confirms that Charles de Gaulle was right all along and all we are is a kind of Trojan Horse for American interests.

Downing Street denies there is anything in the story that Mr Blair woosed Mr Prodi. Media ownership is a touchy subject in modern Italian politics and there can be few who think substituting Murdoch for Berlusconi would constitute an increase in pluralism. The Prodi government has enough on its hands with getting Italy fit for EMU without having to counter allegations that it is permitting foreign meddling.

As for Mr Blair, let us hope that, if Murdoch asked him to intervene, he had the good sense to say no. To sit on his hands while Rupert Murdoch pursues a predatory pricing policy in newspaper markets in this country is one thing. But for the prime minister of the United Kingdom to tout on Murdoch's behalf abroad would be of a shockingly different order of magnitude.



Fees for students

ANDREAS Whitam Smith's "Confessions of a student in the golden era" (24 March) play into the hands of those who would happily turn education into an entirely commercial business rather than viewing it as part of a national strategy. He also reveals a touching naivety.

Many of us who went to university without having to pay directly to do so understood perfectly well where the money for our education came from. It was provided because the nation recognised it needed a skilled workforce of trained graduates - to govern, to build infrastructure, to make sick people well, and to develop goods for export. My fellow students and I studied how to design vital new homes, schools and hospitals, while our colleagues were similarly training in engineering, science or medicine. The moocay was found so we could learn how to create national wealth and improve the quality of life.

Our student grants may have covered the basics of sharing a student flat in a Liverpool back street, but our lifestyles were hardly luxurious. Meanwhile, many of our contemporaries were already earning their own income, marrying, buying homes and starting families, while we deferred those ambitions to complete our training. We were willing to do so in the belief that we would be compensated later through higher than average earnings. But we also understood that we would then pay more income tax which, in turn, would be used (in part) for our universities to educate future generations.

These notions of national goals and inter-generational relationships seem to have been lost in arguments about costs and benefits to the individual, and Andreas Whitam Smith's confessions about his own limited motives in going to university do little to remind us of the bigger picture.

SEBASTIAN MACMILLAN
Architect
Cambridge

THE letter from Diana Warwick (23 March) demonstrates, perhaps unintentionally, just how unfair and poorly thought-out the new system of higher education funding will be. Repayments on a loan will indeed depend on the graduate's personal circumstances - but the amount to be repaid will depend on the parents' income. How can it possibly be acceptable that two colleagues in their thirties, with the same income, may be paying very different loan repayments because of their parents' relative prosperity 15 years earlier?

I COULDNT agree more that we need "citizenship for a new generation" (leading article, 24 March). Unfortunately, the models of citizenship currently running for candidacy are usually far from suitable.

It is an over-expressed fallacy that the youth of today has no interest in politics. This misconception leads to the inevitable next step of questioning how we can encourage our young citizens to become politically active; to vote, stand for council and use all the traditionally accepted avenues for expression of active citizenship.

Why is it that politicians and educationists cannot see that whilst they ask themselves these questions in stuffy offices, our young citizens are out there actively engaging in a new kind of politics? A "globalised" world is offering new opportunities to become politically active in ways which are no longer by necessity tied to the structure of the nation state or formal politics. For example, environmental dangers and a growing demand for some form of standardisation of hu-

man rights, offer communities and individuals an opportunity to act locally on global imperatives.

It is this wider agenda that provides the forum for younger generations to act out their displeasure with the political, social and economic systems they witness around them. They already demonstrate youthful energy and political responsibility, albeit in a form not readily recognised by the old school of citizenship.

DR SARA MACKIAN
Macclesfield, Cheshire

College Lecturer in Engineering
Science
Brasenose College, Oxford

Models of citizenship

I WONDER whether Bishop Belo of East Timor would share the Church Commissioners' view (report, 23 March) that it is acceptable for the Church of England to invest in companies such as British Aerospace, whose sale of weapons to the Indonesian government has contributed to the slaughter of so many Timorese people, just because they also manufacture commercial aeroplanes?

First, the acceptance by the Palestinians of a two-state solution to the conflict is itself a massive compromise on their part - Israel is built on what was Palestinian territory, with millions of refugees from that territory, and their descendants, now scattered around the world and Benjamin Netanyahu's government adamant that they will not be allowed to return.

Second, the United Nations, in line with international law, considers the land acquired by force in 1967 to be occupied territory, and the Israeli settlements built there illegal.

Third, the Oslo Accords signed by the government of Israel expressly prohibit further settlement-building, pending a final agreement by the parties to the conflict.

In the light of this, and much more, Robin Cook's actions on behalf of the European Union in visiting a settlement site and shaking the hand of an elected Palestinian representative is

JAMES SAVAGE
London SW6

Church investment

TV sports coverage

SPORT on television arouses strong emotions and the reaction of some to the publication of the Report of the Advisory Group on Listed Events, which I chaired, may have aroused unnecessary fears among sports lovers who are not subscribers to cable or satellite channels (report, 21 March).

Before appointing the Advisory Group, the Secretary of State consulted widely on the criteria to be taken into account in deciding whether or not to list an event. In order to be eligible for listing, an event must meet the following main criterion:

the event has a special national resonance, not simply a significance to those who ordinarily follow the sport concerned; it is an event which serves to unite the nation; a shared point on the national calendar.

Test cricket, whatever its importance, can hardly be described as a shared point on the national calendar - it is virtually a shared summer - and it is difficult to apply different criteria to premier league football and Test cricket.

The B list actually creates much more protection for the average viewer than was previously available. I accept that secondary coverage - limited live coverage, delayed as-live transmission or edited highlights - is not as good as full live coverage but it does represent a considerable improvement on the current position where, if an event is not listed, the non-satellite viewer is not guaranteed coverage.

Much greater protection will be afforded to the average viewer if the Secretary of State decides to endorse our recommendations.

LORD GORDON OF STRATHBANE
House of Lords, London SW1

Through the looking-glass

COULD Lewis Carroll have invented a situation where, according to recent advertisements, you can save £100 a year by buying your electricity from gas companies and another £100 by buying your gas from electricity companies?

JIM TATELL
Wokingham, Berkshire

What's the funniest part of the joke: the words, the timing, or the lack of laughter?



MILES
KINGTON

THERE has been a small exchange of correspondence recently in this paper about the famous though perhaps not very well-known Jack Benny radio sketch in which a mugger stops the notoriously mean comedian Jack Benny and says "Your money or your life" and the notoriously mean Jack Benny says nothing and the mugger says, "Well?" and the notoriously mean Jack Benny says, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking!", or words to that effect.

What the correspondents were arguing about, I think, was why it was so funny - was the line funny? was the silence funny? was it a sketch or a one-liner? - and I am in the odd position that I should be able to settle all arguments because I have actually heard that Jack Benny sketch. I don't mean I heard it when it first went out, which was in the 1930s, some while before I was born, but that I heard it when I visited the Museum of Broadcasting in New York a few years ago. This is where they keep all the famous TV moments, the

historic moon walks, the great shows of yesterday, blah blah blah, but where they also keep the great moments of radio.

Now, I am just about old enough to remember the first great radio stars, if only from the era when they were being turned into aged TV stars - my Dad was always watching the *Jack Benny Show*, and George Burns and Gracie Allen, and Bob Hope, and Vic Oliver, and I watched along with him - so I do feel some link with that golden age. I know that Vic Oliver played the violin badly and spoke English curiously. I know that Jack Benny also played the violin badly and in addition was mean, and had a black valise named Rochester. Indeed, I knew about Jack Benny's Rochester before I had ever heard of the Brontës' Rochester...

So even when young I could understand the joke when Bob Hope said: "Jack Benny is the meanest man I know. That man is so mean that... Why, I was having dinner with him the other night, and when the

waiter brought the check, he tried to hide in the toilet! But I wouldn't let him in..."

Funny, eh? Well, it was funny back then. But this explains why I do remember being told about this famous moment when the mugger stopped Jack Benny and said, "Your money or your life!", so when they said to me at the Museum of Broadcasting that I could choose a clip from the past, any clip I liked, I ignored things like the Kennedy assassination and went straight for that one. I had heard about it so much and yet I had never actually heard it.

And sure enough they had it, and I listened to it, and it was much as you might imagine, apart from the extra crackles. The robber did stop Jack Benny and did suggest a choice between life and money and Jack Benny did pause an awful long time and made it clear he couldn't make up his mind which was more important, his life or his money, which is a very funny idea, but what came across on this old clip was something which nobody had ever told me

about and which came as a dreadful shock: the audience didn't laugh much at it. Sure, there was a bit of a titter, but no belly laugh, no chorus of roaring, no sign that this was one of the great moments of radio. Just a slight, polite ripple of chuckles. Here was this great comedy moment and all those who were privileged to be there didn't know it was a great comedy moment. It was like being transported back into the Globe Theatre by a time machine to see a Shakespeare play and discovering that everyone was eating nuts and flirting and nobody listening.

Maybe that's part of the reason that radio comedies these days so rarely have live audiences. Television comedies very often still have audiences, but the TV comedy is much more old-fashioned than radio comedy. Radio has learnt how to be funny without an audience. The chunk of comedy that appears on Radio 4 on Wednesday nights under the title of *Late Night Opening* is a good example. There are three programmes involved, "Armstrong and Miller", "The World of Pub", and "Life, Death and Sex with Mike and Sue", and only the last-named has an audience. Well, being a pastiche of a chat show, I suppose it has to. But the other two move so fast and are so intricate that an audience would only get in the way.

All three are pretty funny, funnier than most TV comedy, but "The World of Pub", which I have only just discovered, is something else - breathtakingly inventive, quick-thinking, allusive and so fast to bounce off its own references that an audience reaction would only get in the way. It's written by someone called Tony Roche, I don't know who Tony Roche is, but if ever someone comes to him and says, "You've got a really funny show there, Tony - why don't we try and get it on TV?", I hope turns round and says, "Forget it. TV's not ready for a REALLY fast show. Besides, we'd probably have to have an audience on TV and they might not laugh and how would that sound in the Museum of Broadcasting?"

Stylized handwriting.

What the Arts Council could learn from the Medicis



ANNE
MCELVOY

BUSINESS ACUMEN
IN THE ARTS

SO THE Arts Council is about to be massacred by its new chairman, Gerry Robinson; "a shark in a Val Doonican pullover", mottled one disgruntled member, proving that whatever their other shortcomings, they mix their metaphors very creatively in the world of arts funding.

Mr Robinson is one of those people with a talent for producing invective in others. John Cleese famously sent a fax to him at Granada television after he replaced the head of the channel with an accountant, "*** off it you ignorant upstart caterer."

Mr Robinson's reply went unrecorded. He could have pointed out upstart entrepreneurs have always been the bedrock of the arts, from the Medicis to the Rothschilds, the Tates and the Saatchis. So far, Mr Robinson's most body-thirsty suggestion has been that the 23-strong council should be slimmed down and replaced by a Council of 10. Anyone who has tried to reach agreement on anything with a body of over 10 people on will sympathise with his instinct. It is perfectly good practice, in arts administration as in business, to trim central councils, which tend, like the universe, to expand *indefinitely*.

But the hollering has been predictably robust. The Earl of Clancarty, a powerful member of the Council saw in it "another symptom of the Government stacking arts areas with business and management people who misunderstand how the arts work and are only interested in financial efficiency". This, you may have noticed, is an almost exact inversion of Gerald Kaufman's brusque summary of his hopes for the future administration of the Royal Opera House: namely that a philistine would do as long as he knew how to read a balance sheet.

Both of these viewpoints are caricatures of the truth, knee-jerk responses of one clan to another and as ill-considered and tribal as the football fat's assessment of the opposing team's game. That the debate about the arts in Britain is conducted in such a pantomime way reflects badly on our existing institutions. The desire to drive a wedge between commerce and culture is a foolish and unproductive one. Those who seek to imply that businessmen misunderstand the arts, because they are lost in dreams of their profit margins during the last act of *Metsinger*, are perfectly matched against the Kaufmans (all right, he was sending his son up a little in that report, but not that much) who want to knee-cap the gentlefolk of Covent Garden and put in a Rachmann to run the ROH.

Without patronage, the arts become a mere subsidised branch of the government, reflecting the taste of a very unimaginative elite. The affection of the Blaireau *beau monde* for British art is an example of the way established tastes follow – a few years on – the risky investments of private patrons (like

Charles Saatchi in talents like Damien Hirst). When the rich nobleman Maecenas bought into Horace, Virgil and Propertius, his tastes were doubtless considered controversial. It is rarely public funding alone that provides the impulse for new and daring art. Individuals have hunches and instincts. Regional arts funding bodies play safe.

Anyway, few galleries have resources now for collecting contemporary works. Artists bemoan this because, like most people, they prefer a financially stable existence to a hand-to-mouth one. But as Tony Blair prosaically reminds us: we live in the "real world", and in the real world, however passionately you argue that the arts are as important as hospitals and drains, you will have difficulty making this case against the majority of people who want to secure their publicly-funded hip replacements and cheap, clean water before they fund their local theatre.

Mr Robinson is alive to this worry. He does not believe that the Arts Council in its present form, is able to deliver answers. He is a *Lord High Executioner* bringing the axe of downsizing down on the necks of quite a few formerly important people. The question is whether any of them will be missed.

Picking through the evidence so far, it emerges that his instinct is to simplify the Arts Council into a policy body and leave the regions to distribute their own funds. He also seeks to heal the division between the subsidised and commercial sectors and to end the tendency of the Council to invest in buildings rather than people. This – and not only the businessman's traditional fetish of admiring other businessmen – is why he is seeking to put more entrepreneurs on the board. Let us see whether they deliver before we carp further.

There is a version of the public versus business funding argument which concludes that the arts do not need public money at all and that any music, drama or pictures worth their salt will survive in a purely market economy. It isn't necessarily so. As Günter Grass pointed out in an essay mocking the art collections of Frankfurt banks, commercial sponsors of sculpture share a single aesthetic: "An abstract, but of course unthreatening, one, which produces circular structures in economic-ecological symbiosis representing the endless circulation of the patron's wealth."

We need to maintain a mixed economy in the arts because that is the best available guarantee of a breadth of investment and infrastructural support. But the tired old sniping of the subsidized sector against the commercial must end. The future lies in partnership between the two.

Two worrying silences remain. The first is the regions. It is impossible to construct a consistent national policy for the arts without addressing the problems of upkeep in the regional theatres and concert halls. The lottery has been marvellous at promoting *grands projets* – far less good at targeting more modest institutions which need help with their heating and cleaning bills. Without the wider tax relief on arts donations (campaigned for by this newspaper), regional arts bodies face a daunting task in raising revenue for day to day upkeep.

The second is that the *quid pro quo* for most business sponsors is a generous allocation of tickets for their clients – which in turn restricts public access to the performances and causes resentment among the many people who rightly believe that it is the responsibility of a Labour Government to increase that access.

Mr Robinson's fellow upstarts will find that their problem-solving skills, as well as their understanding of balance sheets, much in demand at the new, leaner Arts Council.

In Whitehall they're beginning to murmur: 'Dead Man Walking'



ANDREW
MARR
THE COMING
RESHUFFLE



Good PMs are good butchers: Blair must prepare to be brutal Brian Harris

THE scene is Whitehall. A murmur rises through the grimy corridors and waiting rooms, just audible above the traffic noise outside. The murmur is passed from secretary to deputy secretary, from messenger to private office. And the murmur goes: "Dead Man Walking". In the minister's office, the white-faced minister, hearing it clearly, fiddles at his tie-knot and adjusts his jaw before stepping outside. But all the bravado in the world can't hide the fact, politically speaking, the minister is dead.

I exaggerate, of course. But the political season is moving towards reshuffle time and already government is awash with speculation about who is out, who down, and who in.

This is a grisly spectacle, one of the few forms of public execution (and, for sensitive ministers, public torture) still sanctioned by a liberal state. But it is probably necessary to our system: prime ministers must be good butchers of their colleagues. And now, quite soon, it is Tony Blair's turn to demonstrate how he will cope.

After weekend stories that the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, was to be moved soon from the Treasury, Mr Blair's press secretary – displaying the gift for modest understatement for which he is becoming famous – described the reports as "The junk food of political journalism", adding, for those who hadn't caught his drift, "All reshuffle stories are crap". Well, fine. But if there is no reshuffle in the spring, it will merely because it is coming in summer instead.

Of recent prime ministers, Margaret Thatcher was a self-confessed bad butcher. She cut away the wets, though not speedily, during her early years. Later on, though, she was too slow and insufficiently ruthless – despite her reputation. She was sentimental about supposed ideological supporters, even when they were bad ministers, and worried about how families would take the news.

Tony Blair will have learned from those years. In opposition, he was always an astute observer of political decline. Now, he has to prove away the poorer performers and use new ministerial hirings to sharpen the country's perception of what his government is all about. Reshuffles are moments of truth. Up to a point, they do for prime ministers what budgets do for chancellors.

But whenever it comes, my predictions are that Blair will be a tough and unsentimental reshuffler; and that his changes will not please the press.

It would be so easy, wouldn't it, to conjure a great whoosh of

pension, in which there would be little reshuffling, so that ministers had two, three or four years of guaranteed office in which to master their departments and show what they could do. That, too, failed as a strategy. Weak ministers were left long. The resignations and firings were often forced on Major – as with David Mellor – or came suddenly and bitterly, as with Norman Lamont. In general, his reshuffles probably weakened rather than strengthened the prime minister.

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happy headlines by, for instance, dropping the Lord Chancellor and his wallpaper hill; or booting out Peter Mandelson from the Dome project and sending him to the Siberia of a "proper job" working for John Prescott; or even firing the Foreign Secretary, whose personal life and spiky public image have not endeared him to Middle Britain.

This would give an essential boost to a key part of the Government's programme that has come to seem diffuse, unfocused and baphazard. Cook is a genuine intellectual enthusiast for reform, and on the radical wing of the party. Giving him an overlord role, like John Prescott's, would be an imaginative stroke.

It is also, however, going to remain a columnist's fantasy. Like Derry Irvine, Gordon Brown and Jack Straw, Cook is judged to have performed very well by Number Ten. The diplomatic messages from other European capitals, and from around the world, are very different in tone from the press complaints about an arrogant and clumsy amateur; his peers regard him as an excellent negotiator with a fine command of detail. Those of us who think that Cook has it in him to be more than that will have to wait.

So what will the reshuffle be like when it finally comes? Expect quite a lot of lesser heads

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to roll. Blair needs to demonstrate that he is a tough leader. A year into the first Labour administration for ages, he will remove all those people who came into government by virtue of their shadow cabinet vote and who have failed to shine since. David Clark and Gavin Strang are two decent, hardworking cabinet ministers who are probably for the chop on that basis; but so are many more junior people.

The tougher questions are about the future of Frank Dobson at health and Harriet Harman at social security. Dobson will have to deliver on his 100,000 cut in waiting lists to survive. Harman, meanwhile, has powerful enemies in Downing Street, and not only because of the serious mistake in cutting lone parents' allowances and in opening the debate on disability payments. But she has had Gordon Brown as a powerful political protector – because, say cynics, she allows him to run her department as a proxy of the Treasury. If so, Brown has done her no great favours since her survival would be seen in the party as a victory for the Brownsites and therefore, perhaps, a sign of prime ministerial weakness.

What, finally, of the most media-magnetic personality of them all, Peter Mandelson? He is judged to be ready for promotion but there is the huge problem of the Dome. Though some of the project's creative people think it is being badly damaged by association with him, to move Mandelson away from it would be some kind of concession of failure. I don't think either Mandelson or Blair would go for that.

He could of course take over either the culture department, headed by Chris Smith, or the cabinet office and machinery of government job now done by David Clark, and keep the Dome too. And given the power-play inside New Labour, any reshuffle which had nothing to say about Mandelson would be very odd indeed.

The cabinet office job would be the shrewder move, since the relationship between Number Ten and the rest of Whitehall is far from perfect – and a proposal for reworking it was one of the ideas in Mandelson's pre-election book. Further, that personal strengthening of the Blair's grip is really what this first reshuffle will be all about. He must cut to reshape, and destroy careers to strengthen his project. It will be a grisly rite of passage but after it, Britain will have just a little less Tony, and a little more Prime Minister.

Jobs will soon be flexible, fulfilling and fun



HAMISH
MCRAE
THE FUTURE
OF WORK

SO WE are all going to work. A week ago Gordon Brown announced changes to the tax and National Insurance systems to try to reduce the barriers that discourage people from taking jobs. This week Frank Field has outlined proposals to change the benefits system which will have a similar effect.

If the present government does have a big idea, it is that we should become a "high work" society. That is not to criticise the notion. Indeed given the adverse demographic headwind into which all developed countries will be butting, the only way we will be able to increase living standards over the next generation will be to get just about everyone who can work into some kind of eco-

nomic activity. It will be the only way we will be able to support the growing army of pensioners without a sharp, and probably unsustainable, rise in the taxation burden.

In fact we are already quite a high work society. Britain is, like the US and Japan in the proportion of people of working age (16-64) that are in the labour force – they either have some kind of job or they are looking for one. The US has the highest proportion, over 79 per cent in 1996, while Japan and Britain tied with more than 77 per cent. By contrast, the average for Germany, France, Italy and Spain was only 66 per cent.

But if we are – by developed country standards – quite good at getting people who can work into work, I'm not so sure that we are good at tailoring the jobs so that the jobs are flexible, fulfilling and fun. We see the problem in macro-economic or public finance terms because it is obviously a problem for the economy and for government.

But it is also a problem for human beings. Governments can remove obstacles to work by improving the tax system and they can bully people into it by adjusting the benefits system. They cannot make jobs *nicer*.

That surely is more important than anything else. If we are going to move to an even higher-work society than we are now, where there is considerable social, moral and financial pres-

sure on people to do some sort of work, then the only way to make that tolerable is to try to make work more enjoyable.

Ridiculous? As an aim to strive for, of course not many people, maybe most people, find the social interaction of the workplace one of the great attractions of doing a job. In practice there will inevitably be unpleasant jobs that need to be done.

The onus is surely on employers to try to fine-tune work practices. "The trick," as Robert

Louis Stevenson put it, "is the make the laughter outweigh the tears."

Enlightened employers know this. Here are three random examples. Just last week thousands of US students headed to Florida for the annual spring break – the traditional co-deavour of partying and boozing which used to take place at Fort Lauderdale and now has moved up to Daytona Beach. Thanks to the long US boom, American companies are desperate for good graduates. So

home want to look at houses at the weekend. But estate agents also need to staff their offices at weekend. So they use shiftworkers to help show people round, meet people at the house, let them in, go round with them and make sure it is locked up afterwards. The shiftworkers get some money and have a reasonably interesting day, and the job gets done. It is clever use of – as economists would say – marginal labour.

Third example is the way several of our supermarket

chains have special programmes to attract older workers who have taken early retirement. Naturally they tailor the hours to suit the person, and they have found that provided they are flexible in the terms they offer they can get particularly competent people to come and flexible places to work, because they knew that was the way to get the best applicants.

Another example is here in London. Most people moving

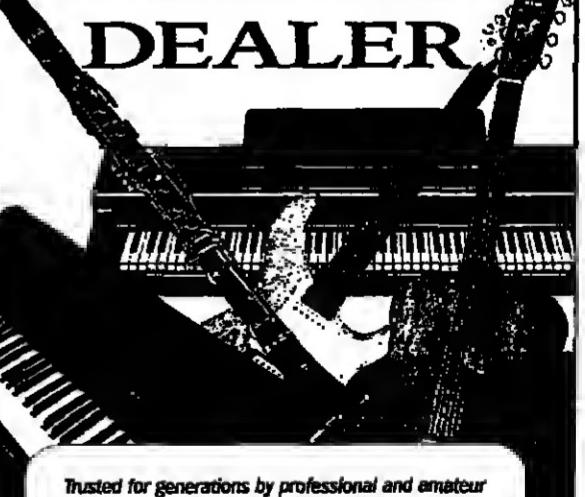
to the frontier between paid work and voluntary work will tend to disappear. More people will carry out some kind of voluntary work, regarding this as part of their normal life, alongside their paid activities. Meanwhile more voluntary work will be partly-paid, that is not at full commercial rates.

Fourth, the distinction between paid work and voluntary work will become less clear-cut. People will work for the majority of their time with an employer, but will have their own private commercial activities alongside this. Both sides will need to be frank with each other to make sure that these sort of relationships benefit everyone.

All this makes management more difficult. It is much harder to run bottom-up flexible organisations, than top-down command and control ones.

But the plain fact is that this is a commercial necessity given the changing shape and aspirations of the work-force. Besides, what is wrong with trying to make work more fun?

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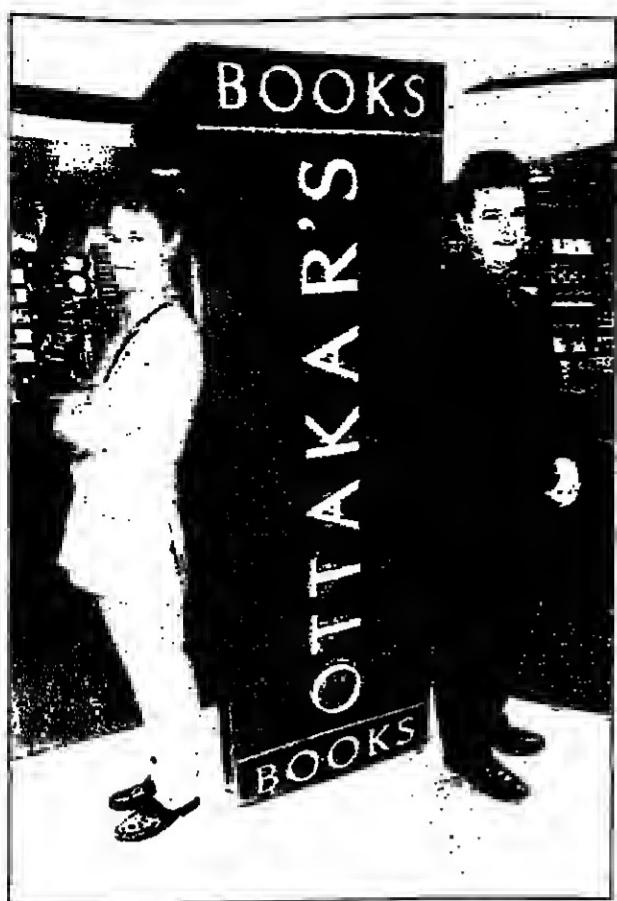
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Book profits: James Heneage, Ottakar's managing director (left), and Neil Lloyd, finance director

Ottakar's pushes ahead with float after talks with US book giant

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

nor will there be. We will remain independent and we will float."

It is thought that they centred on a possible joint venture in certain aspects of the business.

This could be Ottakar's using Barnes & Noble's expertise in developing larger stores.

Mr Heneage admitted that there was nothing to stop Barnes & Noble buying a stake in the business after its float.

Mr Heneage was speaking as Ottakar's published its pathfinder prospectus, which showed pre-tax profits last year rose 77 per cent to £2m. Sales grew 63 per cent to £38m.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

P&O profits steam ahead

LORD STERLING, P&O's pugnacious chairman, has had to navigate choppy waters over the last three years. Some of the group's shareholders called for his head as dividend payouts remained at a standstill and the City moaned about the company's perceived lack of direction.

But his lordship really did have something to smile about yesterday. He unveiled a better-than-expected set of 1997 profit figures and a positive outlook for the future. Pre-tax profits rose 30 per cent to £433.9m in the year to 31 December 1997 while headline profits before re-organisation costs were up 25 per cent to £401.2m. There was no immediate dividend hike but there were strong hints this would happen next time.

There were strong contributions from the cruise, property and ferries divisions and P&O has embarked on a series of joint ventures to counter difficult markets.

Partnerships with Stena and Shougang have helped shore up profits for ferries and bulk shipping respectively. The only disappointments were the P&O Nedlloyd joint container shipping venture and the Trans European trucking arm.

P&O is slimmer, trimmer and working hard to come up to new standards of return on capital employed (Roce), now set at 15 per cent. Over two years the group overall has raised its Roce game from 11.1 to 12.9 per cent.

The P&O Nedlloyd venture languished at 2 per cent while Trans European was also dismal. But Lord Sterling is confident his expected predecessor, Tim Harris, can rescue the former while the latter is threatened with a sell-off if it fails to improve.

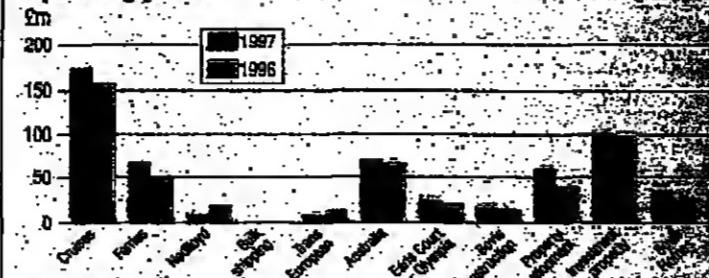
P&O shares, which have outperformed the market by 9 per cent over the last three months, rose another 33p to 889p. Analysts expect 1998 profits to reach £475m, putting P&O on a forward multiple of 16.8. It is not to late to climb aboard.

P&O: At a glance

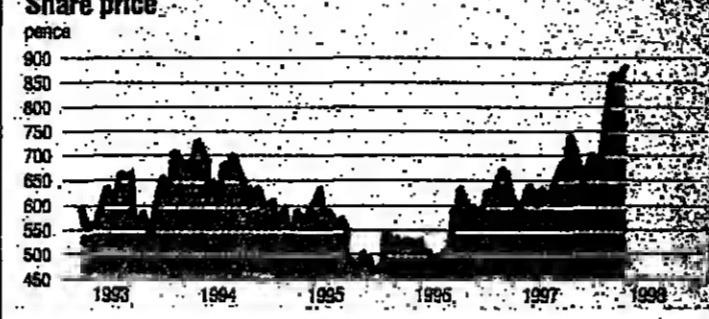
Market value: £5.5bn, share price 889p (+33p)

	1995	1996	1997	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	5.5	5.9	6.6	7.1	5.9
Pre-tax profits (£m)	520.6	348.5	320.4	332.9	340.6
Earnings per share (p)	68.0	38.5	37.8	40.1	53.1
Dividends per share (p)	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5

Operating profit



Share price



Iceland makes a cool comeback

IF THERE was an Oscar for unlikely retail comeback of the year then Malcolm Walker's Iceland would surely win it. This time last year the company announced a buy-back of a third of its shares to boost flagging share price after its first dip in profits for 26 years. By July the

shares had dipped to a five year low 77p and by September the board had controversially re-negotiated their share option prices (downwards obviously).

And now look what's happened. Iceland surprised everyone yesterday with sales sharply boosted by the introduction of home delivery. The shares followed suit rising 10 per cent to 197.5p as analysts rushed to upgrade.

Same-store sales are up by a thumping 16 per cent in current trading though this is against a very weak com-

parison the previous year. It is expecting the figure to drop to a still respectable mid-single figure over the year.

All this should not detract from Mr Walker's entrepreneurial achievement. If there is a criticism oow it is that the company is trying to do too much. Gearing is high but should fall to less than 70 per cent in two years. Assuming current year profits of £60m the share trade on a measty forward p/e of less than 10. A 50 per cent discount to the market looks cheap.

Nycomed deals prove a success

NYCOMED Amersham has had a hectic year, completing not one but two mergers to create a real force in the worldwide healthcare market. Both deals have been a real success for shareholders. Underlying earnings per share, perhaps the best way to measure the growth in the business, jumped 41 per cent to 90.1p. The share price has reflected this great performance, rising strongly since last Autumn.

The new group has only just started to reap the benefit of cost savings, which should rise to £70m by the turn of the century. But the group will have to start producing strong organic growth to justify its rating. Its X-ray business will continue to suffer this year from a price war in the US.

A slimmed down pharmaceutical business is showing better returns following a sharp cut in the research and development budget. The real driver to growth, however, will be its life sciences business, which specialises in developing ways to speed up the development of new drugs.

The shares slipped 55p to 227.1p yesterday on US trading and currency fears. ABN Amro Hoare Govett forecasts current year profits of £227m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e of 22. Nycomed Amersham still looks like a solid hold with good long term prospects.

Flextech plans holiday channel

By Peter Thal Larsen

FLEXTECH, the television programming group, yesterday unveiled plans to launch an interactive travel television channel which will allow viewers to order holidays while watching programmes about their destinations.

Brett Harman, managing director, said the channel was likely to be one of many based around home shopping. He said Flextech had chosen travel because many viewers already use Teletext when planning their holidays.

The announcement was made as Flextech announced a net profit, before exceptional, of £1.9m for 1997, compared to a £15.6m loss the previous year. The profits were struck before exceptional costs of £7m related to the start-up costs of UKTV, Flextech's joint venture with the BBC, and the costs of relaunching Flextech's own channels.

The company said it was planning to launch another two UKTV channels. The first, called UKFM, will be a music channel similar to MTV. The second will be a sports entertainment channel carrying quizzes and gameshows.

Flextech said it was still in negotiations with BSkyB, the satellite operator, about a deal which would offer all Flextech's channels to subscribers to BSkyB's digital service, which launches in June. The two companies are understood to have reached an agreement on price. Flextech shares closed up 29p at 535p.

Savoy's sparkle set to raise asking price

By Andrew Yates

THE SAVOY HOTEL group, the subject of a furious bidding war, yesterday burst back into the black, announcing pre-tax profits of £22.2m in 1997 compared to a loss of £24.3m in the previous year.

The figures smashed analysts' forecasts and could raise the asking price of the group, which owns The Connaught, Claridge's and The Berkeley, to more than £550m.

The Savoy's resurgence also ensures that Ramon Pajares, managing director, and his management team, will be kept on by any new owners if the group is sold.

American hotel groups and financial buyers are circling.

Blackstone, the US bank, has already tabled an indicative bid of £520m. However analysts believe that the Savoy's strong results should attract buyers from around the world keen to get hold of some of the most

prized properties in the industry. The interest could push the price much higher.

No formal offer has yet been put to shareholders and none of the potential suitors have started due diligence. The group is unlikely to select a final buyer for some time. A sale is being held up by a wrangle between the Wontner family and Granada, the group's largest shareholders, over the division of the spoils. Bickering within the Wontner family may also scupper a deal. Doubts about a sale going ahead sent Savoy's shares down 87.5p to 1800p yesterday.

Mr Pajares said he was confident he could continue to improve the performance of the hotels who ever ended up controlling them and was happy to work for any owner.

He is keen to take the Savoy name abroad. "We have no plans to do that at the moment but speaking on a personal level the brand name is excellent and it would be a very good chance to ... look at opportunities overseas," he said.

Savoy's operating profits jumped 54 per cent to £24.2m, reflecting the fruits of a £72m refurbishment program at its flagship hotels over the last few years.

Higher occupancy and room rates helped operating margins improve to 23.8 from 17.7 per cent. Operating profits at The Berkeley grew 61 per cent thanks to the opening of an exclusive health club on the site in conjunction with Christian Dior. A strong marketing drive in the US and Europe to attract new visitors meant the group was able to shrug off the potentially damaging effect of the strong pound and the economic turmoil in the Far East. The group plans to spend another £9m sprucing up the hotels this year.

Over the last three years its pre-tax profits have grown 460 per cent and dividends have trebled.

Skilled workforce 'is no economic panacea'

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

IMPROVING the skills of the workforce might be at the top of the Government's jobs agenda, but it is no panacea for improving Britain's economic performance. That will also depend on companies aiming to sell higher quality goods and services, according to a new report from the Employment Policy Institute.

Many British businesses opt for what the authors identify as the "Gerald Ratner strategy" of competing on the basis of low price and low quality.

When the former head of the bargain jewellery chain described its products as "crap", he might have been foolish but he was honest, according to Ewart Keep of Warwick Business School and Ken Mayhew of Pembroke College, Oxford.

Their research suggests that many British companies opt for this strategy rather than developing high-quality products that require skilled labour. This can make sense for businesses that do not have a wealthy customer base or do

not have the internal organisation to move upmarket.

Given this pattern, improved workforce skills will not by itself guarantee a more competitive UK economy.

Mr Keep said: "For many British companies, competitiveness lies not in upskilling workers to make quality products but through price. Providing companies with more highly skilled workers can only increase levels of dissatisfaction when those workers are employed in poor quality, low-paid jobs."

The paper, "Was Ratner Right?" recommends a dual policy of encouraging businesses to opt for the high-value strategy at the same time as improving standards of education and training.

Companies would also have to switch to patterns of work organisation that allowed employees to use their skills, and improve employee relations to improve trust and motivation.

It concludes that this "poses a major challenge to policy-makers for whom upskilling has for too long been a convenient 'magic bullet' solution".

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25/SHARES

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 1998

25

HK group pockets £176m from Somerfield merger

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

THOSE chaps at Dairy Farm must be feeling pretty pleased with themselves. At the beginning of the year, the Hong-Kong based food retailing group, part of the Jardine Matheson empire, was sitting on a large stake in supermarket group Kwik Save which was rapidly diminishing in value.

Dairy Farm wanted out, but wanted a better price for its shares than the market was prepared to pay.

Their response was to broker a merger with Somerfield, the rival supermarket group, in February. The deal, which lifted shares in both companies, got the thumbs up from the regulators earlier last week and was declared unconditional last Friday.

The merger left Dairy Farm with an 11 per cent holding in the new, enlarged Somerfield. But not for long. Yesterday, the Hong Kong group, acting through SBC Warburg, placed all its shares

with institutional investors, at a price around 333p.

Analysts said the main interest was likely to have come from US value investors as well as UK tracker funds, which have to have a holding in Somerfield now that it is part of the FTSE 250 index.

The result is that everybody is happy. Dairy Farm pockets a cool £176m for its trouble, while investors no longer worry about an overhang of stock in the market. Indeed, Somerfield shares put on 7.5p to 345.5p yesterday — almost £1 higher than they were when the merger was announced.

The Somerfield activity was one of the few bits of hard news on a trading day which was otherwise soggy with old rumours.

Traders attempted to dress up the old story of consolidation in the defence industry. Rather than wheel out the old one about a merger between British Aerospace and

GEC, both stocks were instead being pushed as potential predators in the US.

The argument runs something like this: The US government's decision to block the merger between aerospace groups Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman means both will be looking for partners elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the European defence industry is expected to present a proposal for consolidation to the French, German and British governments by the end of the month.

Evo, though every indication is that the report will be a damp squib, some continue to hold out hopes for a positive statement.

GEC finished the day at

469p, up 21p, while British Aerospace put on 52p to close at 2015p.

Ladbrokes was the best-performing stock in the Footsie, rising 22p — or 6.5 per cent — to close at 358p on renewed speculation that the group is re-

viving its merger plans with the Hilton hotel group. Analysts think Tuesday's collapse of Hilton's merger with US group Circus makes a deal with Ladbrokes more likely.

Despite all this rumour, the Footsie hardly responded, making little progress towards the 6,000 mark until a strong opening on Wall Street — a response to the previous

day's fall — lifted the index to 5983.7, up 36.7, at the close.

Among the blue chips, drinks groups Allied Domecq and Diageo moved ahead after ABN Amro declared both as a buy.

The broker reckons that

Allied Domecq, op 1p

at 587p, is good value even if it fails to find a merger partner for its drinks businesses.

Meanwhile, the argument that the market has yet to recognise the full merger benefits residing in Diageo lifted the shares 12.5p to 725p.

Meanwhile, Bass put on

41p to 1145p, Bristol Hotel,

in which the hotels group has a 32 per cent stake, announced a merger with rival US outfit FelCor Suite Hotels. The deal values Bass' stake at \$390m.

British Telecom gave up some of its recent gains after unveiling its latest price cuts. An SBC Warburg downgrade also helped knock the shares down 25p to 656p.

Share Spotlight

Stock price, pence

360

340

320

300

280

260

240

220

AM J J A S O N D J F M

Share Dividends

450p

430p

410p

390p

370p

350p

330p

310p

290p

270p

250p

230p

210p

190p

170p

150p

130p

110p

90p

70p

50p

30p

10p

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10p

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50p

70p

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150p

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1950p

1970p

1990p

2010p

2030p

2050p

2070p

2090p

2110p

2130p

Leader Lara goes his own way and passes important first test

NO West Indies captain has been more diligently groomed for the post, more actively promoted for it or more openly coveted it. None came to it by a longer or more contentious route. So how has Brian Lara fared in the first series at the helm? The simple answer is that he won.

As Mike Atherton, his beleaguered counterpart, and Richie Richardson and Courtney Walsh, Lara's predecessors, have painfully discovered, it is the one criterion by which all captains are ultimately judged.

In Lara's case, instant success, even a narrow 2-1 advantage, was more critical.

The West Indies had just returned from a disastrous series in Pakistan, heavily beaten in all three Tests; when his appointment instead of Walsh was confirmed in early January, Walsh himself and the tour manager Clive Lloyd, the former revered captain, spoke of a lack of pride and commitment in the team.

There were snide suggestions that Walsh and Lara were at loggerheads and that Lara (average 21.5) did not pull his weight.

Lara's disciplinary record was such that there were serious doubts whether he was temperamentally capable of handling the responsibility. His publicised tantrums had brought him before the West Indies Cricket Board's disciplinary committee four times in the past couple of years. Lara was under the microscope and he knew it.

In the past two and a half months he has not put a foot wrong off the field and not much on the field either. A smile has seldom been far from his handsome face, he has

been co-operative and comfortable with the media and clearly at ease with his players.

Realising the value of experience around him, he courted Walsh when the displaced captain took a week deciding whether he would continue. He personally emphasised to Curtly Ambrose his essential worth when rumours were flying

around that the great fast bowler was about to retire. He depended heavily on them, repeatedly approaching both during an over with a suggestion or a pat on the back and they never let him down.

With seemingly insignificant suggestions Lara encouraged his newer players, too. When Philo Wallace, the pow-

erful opener was out for a dazzling 92 in the final Test, he returned to a standing ovation from around the ground.

Lara, next man in, pointedly waited on the dressing-room steps himself applauding, so that Wallace, in his third Test, had the stage all to himself.

On the field he has not been tactically inhibited by the newness of his assignment, sometimes to the point of obvious error. But, as always, he has been prepared to be guided by instinct rather than orthodoxy.

He baffled in Port of Spain

per has done, a legacy of his upbringing in Trinidad. The upshot was that Hooper's off-breaks claimed more wickets in the series than any West Indian spinner since Lance Gibbs 21 years earlier and the leg-spinner Dianamath Ramnarine enjoyed an encouraging introduction to Test cricket. It has given the attack a refreshing balance and we can expect more of the same.

Lara would have appreciated the luxury of being able to blood a few younger players but the object, first and foremost, was to win. He has done that.

Verve and nerve undoes sad Seles

Tennis

By John Roberts
in Key Biscayne

THE saddest sight of the week so far at the Lipton Championships here was of the once-great Monica Seles, 24, her fighting spirit intact but her body sagging for the want of fitness, labouring to defeat at the hands of Anna Kournikova, a 16-year-old picture of vitality.

Kournikova's verve filled the Centre Court again yesterday as she dismantled Conchita Martinez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion, 6-3, 6-0, barely breaking stride from one point to the next. That took the 25th-ranked Kournikova into a quarter-final against the second seed, Lindsay Davenport.

Beating Seles, however, was a special event for Kournikova, whose maturing talent, it will be remembered, took her to the Wimbledon semi-finals last year. She squealed with delight after winning, 7-5, 6-4, describing the success as "probably my most enjoyable victory".

There was no spite in the statement. Quite the contrary. "Monica's always been the player that I admired most," the

Americanised Russian explained. "It was my dream to play against her. I feel great that I played against her and that I won, of course. But I just want to say that she's a great athlete and I will always admire her."

One day Kournikova might tell her grandchildren about the time she beat her tennis idol. We trust that she will not gloss over the point that Seles, distraught by her father's illness and out of condition after two months' absence from tournaments, cut an almost matrity figure.

Kournikova expressed compassion. "I feel bad for her, for her dad, for what happened to her [when she was stabbed in 1993]," she said. "I think she was the greatest ever. If nothing had happened to her, I think she would win another 20 Grand Slams, or whatever."

"When I was growing up, she was the young and upcoming player. I remember her playing French Open against Steffi Graf, when I was like eight years old or something. I like her game, her very aggressive style. I try to play the same way."

Seles is also trying to play the same way, chiefly from memory, although her thoughts have established a different priority

Dates have been released for

the opening set of his match yes-

terday, but when Jeff Tarango

is on the other side of the net

anything can happen. On this

occasion, the turbulent Ameri-

cian simply put his game

together and prospered, 3-6, 6-2.

Unlike the Davis Cup, the

coaches will only come on court

and talk with their players dur-

ing change-overs after sets. These will be extended from 90 to 120 seconds. Players without a travelling coach will be able to nominate someone else, a doubles partner, say, subject to the approval of the supervisor.

Would players be allowed to use mobile phones to contact

their coach if he is unable to attend the event but maybe watching on television? "Nothing in the rules prevents a player phoning up his coach," said Weller Evans, vice-president of ATP Tour player services. But is it good to talk?

Scores, Digest, page 31

ing change-overs after sets. These will be extended from 90 to 120 seconds. Players without a travelling coach will be able to nominate someone else, a doubles partner, say, subject to the approval of the supervisor.

Would players be allowed to use mobile phones to contact

Fish batters Krantz's ear

Sailing

AFTER the perils of the Southern Ocean comes a new danger for the crews in the Whitbread Round the World Race – flying fish.

Gunnar Krantz, the skipper of Swedish Match, was left with earache after a close encounter with airborne marine life on day 11 of the sixth leg from Brazil to Florida. "Luckily, I had just put my hood up when the fish banged into my ear," Krantz said. "It was pretty violent crash. I could hear the bells long afterwards."

The leg leader, EF Langrage, has also had problems with the masses of flying fish the fleet is encountering as it approaches the turning point of the island of Barbuda. "They get scooped up in the water that ends up on the deck and get in our sail bags, sheet bags etc," the skipper, Paul Cayard, reported.

Cayard has now stretched his lead over Britain's Silk Cut to lead over 20 miles.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (left leg, 4,750 miles, 500 Sebastião, Bras, to Fort Lauderdale, USA; 1st EF Langrage; P Cayard, 1,025 miles to the Silk Cut, 2nd Paul Cayard, 1,025 miles to the Silk Cut, 3rd Monsoon Kruzer (Nor) K Frost, +436; 4th Swedish Match (Swe) G Krantz, +44; 5th Cup of Nations (USA) +45; 6th China Cup (USA) +45; 7th Robt (USA) P Starbridge, +42.5; 8th Brunel Survey (Neth) H Keen, +22.5; 9th EF Education (Swe) C Guillou, +17.5)

King finally ready to resume his throne

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

ALEX KING celebrated the latest of his many returns to fitness yesterday by gambling a few hard-earned shillings on the fruit machine situated in a corner of the Wasps clubhouse. It was a risky venture: England's forgotten outside-half has suffered such mind-blowing misfortune this season that he fully expected to hit the jackpot and then get paid in old 50p pieces.

Still, things are about to look up for the stand-off who has turned rank bad luck into an art form. King is an odds-on favourite to put months of inter-

"Basically, I got sick to the back teeth of hobbling around, so I decided to bite the bullet and take some time out," he said yesterday. "It's been difficult, incredibly frustrating, and I've hated every minute of the last couple of months. But the rest and constant physiotherapy seems to have done the trick; I've played two second-team games recently, really physical tests against the Navy and the London Irish second-string, and I'm feeling right on top of things again."

Wasps will not name their side until tomorrow but with Paul Sampson, their rookie full-back, struggling with ankle trouble, they will probably play Gareth Rees at full-back – on the nar-

row Loftus Road pitch, the foursquare Canadian constitutes a one-man blanket defence – and reinstates King as a crafty playmaker. Sale should also be at full strength; their worry surrounds their hooker, Steve Diamond, who has shingles, although Davis Rees, Tom Beim and Jos Baxendell are nursing niggles.

London's other band of knock-out hopefuls, Saracens, must first negotiate tonight's huge Premiership rumble at Newcastle before worrying about the final few weeks of a marvellously satisfying career, will both turn out for Saracens tonight. Bracken has recovered from the shoulder injury that cost him a Calcutta Cup cap on Sunday, while Sella has completed a mandatory three-week concussion lay-off. The selectorial reshuffle sees Ryan Constable move from

midfield to right wing, with Matt Slinger taking over from Gavin Johnson at full-back.

Newcastle were still assessing the Calcutta Cup injury fallout yesterday, but they were able to count on Nick Popplewell's services at loose head. The respected Irish lion has committed himself to another two seasons in the North-east but at 32, he will call time on his international career at the end of the season.

"You can't go on forever and I'm not getting any younger," he explained. Tonight's little encounter with Sarries, in which he goes eyeball to eyeball with his countryman, Paul Wallace, will put a good few years on both of them.

Holyfield arranges Akinwande title defence

Boxing

EVANDER HOLYFIELD will defend his World Boxing Association heavyweight title against the Briton Henry Akinwande on 6 June at Madison Square Garden, New York.

"There are just a few little details to work out," said Marina Capuro, of the American cable channel Showtime, which will handle the pay-per-view distribution of the fight.

The fight will be Holyfield's first since he stopped Michael Moorer in November. An official announcement is expected next Monday.

Another British heavyweight, Herbie Hide, has been forced to move the first defence of his World Boxing Organisation title against the American Obed Sullivan to Manchester's Nynex Arena on 18 April.

Hide was originally scheduled to appear on a bill in

Dublin two weeks earlier but has been forced to make the switch because Steve Robinson's challenge for Luisito Espinoza's WBC featherweight crown has had to be postponed following a bereavement in the champion's family.

Robinson, who will now face Espinoza at the end of May or beginning of June, will still fight on the Manchester promotion in a 10-round contest as part of his preparation for the title contest.

BASINGSTOKE BISON will cease to be a Superleague team at the end of this month after the franchise owners, Basingstoke and Deane Council, withdrew financial support yesterday.

At a special meeting of the borough council, it was agreed that a Superleague team will not continue to operate from the Basingstoke Ice Rink and Lido. The news is the second ma-

ior blow to Superleague in the last 24 hours after the American businessman Blake Cullen chose to pull out of the running for the Birmingham franchise on Monday.

Basingstoke council's sport and recreation manager, Neil Cole, said: "The recommendation to withdraw from the Superleague for the 1998/99 season was approved due to the large financial implication, which would have been in excess of £300,000. Professional

ice hockey will be fully considered, at other levels, for the 1998/99 season. Junior ice hockey development, skating lessons and public skating will continue to operate at the site."

The Superleague chief executive, Ian Taylor, said: "Although this is a setback for the sport, we have substantial interest from operators who are interested in franchises across the UK and we anticipate more teams joining Superleague in the future."

Light arrives after dark days for Oxford's sole Swede

HENRIK NILSSON will be the first, and only, Swedish oarsman to row in the Boat Race when he starts for Oxford on Saturday. There should have been two.

"I was rowing in the Swedish national team with Fredrik Hulten when we decided to apply together to do postgraduate work in Oxford," Nilsson said. "Then, last May, after we had won our places, he was killed in a car crash. I was really devastated by his death. He was three years older and had taught me so much about rowing and sculling. We talked about it all the time."

Nilsson was left alone, with no partner to race with at the 1997 World Championships and without his friend to accompany him to the Dark Blue spires.

Hulten had been the best sculler in Sweden for a decade. He was honoured throughout the season with a minute's silence at international regattas. He left a vacuum behind for his team members and for many of them a sense that it would now be even harder to make a mark on the world scene. For Nilsson, the place waiting for him at Oxford was a relief and, almost as importantly, a chance to fulfil his promise.

Nilsson grew up in Sweden's deep south at Lund and after high school there went into the army for 15 months' military service. He was drafted into the Spanare, a unit that specialised

in working in small groups behind enemy lines. He was an officer who first learned and then taught soldiers to "dig in and cover ourselves and to live for days if necessary without supplies in enemy territory. We were meant to reconnote their positions and to stay buried, or at least out of sight. Sometimes the tanks drove right over the holes we lay in."

Oxford may well need this ambushing mentality on Saturday, when the Light Blues are likely to prove the more powerful off the start and, if they get a run at it, very hard to stop. One who has been trained to dig in and

survive on scraps and then to stop the Soviet tanks in their tracks should be well equipped for a race which may well be a copy of 1997 and go all the way.

Nilsson's urge to win is more than simply a product of his military training. He has suffered ill luck throughout his rowing career. In his first international season he was chosen for the Under-23 World Championships in Linz, Austria, and ended up in intensive care with blood poisoning. At the next year's competition he got food poisoning at Naro in Sicily. In 1992 he missed Olympic selection in the Swedish coxed

four by one-tenth of a second and spent the next two years in the wilderness training alone.

In 1995, however, Thor Nilssen, a Norwegian, took the Swedish team under his wing and convinced Nilsson he had the potential to race at the highest level, and took the Swedish quadruple scull to sixth place in the Olympic final in Atlanta.

The follow-up season went badly wrong. Nilsson broke his leg sailing and, just as he returned to training, Hulten died.

Nilsson has much to prove on Saturday and wants a winner's medal, as much for his friend's memory, as for himself.



Nilsson: Ambush mentality

Stylized logo with the word 'INDEPENDENT' written vertically.

Momentous McCoy puts Doctor on call

By John Cobb

THE LEGIONS who believe that Tony McCoy's judgement of horseflesh has been as big a factor in his rise as his skills in the saddle should pay heed to his words at Chepstow last night after he equalled the record number of wins in a season.

Failure in the last race denied McCoy the 223rd success this term that would have pushed him past the mark established by Peter Scudamore in 1989, but the record will not be safe for long. "I should do it in the first at Ludlow tomorrow as Doctor seems to have a winning chance," McCoy said.

Among the rider's achievements at Cheltenham last week – where his five wins equalled

another record – was the feat of correctly predicting that he would win the final three races of the meeting. Doctor, who was already going to start at short odds is likely to be almost unbeatable now that he has been tipped by McCoy.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Pettytaun (Towcester 3.10)
NB: Mammy's Choice (Towcester 3.40)

McCoy also had revealing words as to how he has smashed Scudamore's record with more than two months of the season to run. "I had my first day off this season on Monday and I have been very lucky to steer clear of all injuries and sus-

pensions since the season started," he said.

"It's brilliant to equal somebody like Scr's record as he was a fantastic jockey. I would not have been able to do it without the help of Martin Pipe and my agent, Dave Roberts."

Dave is brilliant at picking rides for me, getting me on to the good horses as well as keeping me off the bad ones and I have been lucky to fall in with all the right people since Tony Balding brought me over from Ireland."

Roberts, however, was happy to deflect the credit towards his protegé. "Tony is the easiest man in the world to work for. He's 110 per cent switched on to the job and gives every horse a ride whether it's the Cheltenham Gold Cup or a selling hurdle."

When Scudamore set his record – or indeed Jonjo O'Neill's figure of 149 in 1978 –

McCoy had 100 wins from 200 starts.

GOING: Good (Good to Soft in places).

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2. LEADING TRAINERS: P. Webb 67 winners from 262 runners (success rate 25.2%). Miss H Knight 34 (10%). P Hobley 27 (22%).

3. FAVOURITES: 169 wins from 271 riders (62%). P Hobley 19.7% (89%).

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Swiss timing preoccupies Hoddle

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent
in Berne

 ENGLAND are in Switzerland today as part of their preparations for a World Cup campaign which should open in 80F conditions in Marseilles in June. Yesterday they woke up to a blanket of snow.

It may have turned Berne's medieval city centre into a living picture postcard but it was not what Glenn Hoddle wished to see when he pulled back the curtains.

Having lost nine players from his squad – and had another seven unavailable when it was picked – this was all the England coach needed. "It was in the 60s when we sent someone out here a fortnight ago," he said, "but you can't control the weather."

The game is not thought to be under threat (snow is hardly unique here) but the pitch is likely to be wet if not frozen, not good news for Premiership managers concerned about further injuries or a national coach trying to assess players.

Yet while the match will present a rather different challenge to Tunisia in 12 weeks' time it should be a good test of temperament and technique. The Swiss, in their first match under new management, are expected to provide lively opposition. Despite the injury problems England can still field a useful side and Hoddle is likely to try one or two experiments.

One of these is expected to be the forward pairing of Michael Owen and Alan Shearer. Another is a first start for the 19-year-old West Ham defender Rio Ferdinand. A third possibility is the use of a back four since the Swiss are expected to adopt an Ajax-style 3-4-3 formation.

Hoddle's defensive options are limited by having only one regular full-back, Andy Hinchcliffe, in the squad and he must pass a fitness test on his sore Achilles. Either Steve McManaman or Paul Merson will play in the "hole" behind the strikers, with McManaman also a possible wing-back.

"Ideally you experiment within a structure but this might be a good game to throw people in and see how they handle it," Hoddle said. "There



The England coach, Glenn Hoddle (right), monitors his two teenage charges, Rio Ferdinand (left) and Michael Owen, in a Berne blizzard

Photograph: Reuters

are not many opportunities left for players to take their chance so my message for those playing tomorrow is to take this one. Every player in the squad has a chance; there are only about 12 to 13 certainties."

"I have a 22 at the back of my

mind but it is not cast in stone. So many players could be injured and I don't want to disappoint myself. I would like to play my first-choice XI soon but that depends on injuries."

Owen, naturally, is the centre of attention, with his picture appearing

in many of the local papers. Hoddle, understandably, said he was "still on trial" for a World Cup place, and was not yet among the dozen or so certainties for France.

"He will be ready in two or three years, I know that about him and Rio.

What I need to find out is will they be ready in two or three months. Michael has a lot to learn, he needs time to develop. He has played a lot of football and I need to see how sharp he is at the end of the season. He could be a very, very good as a substitute."

Shearer, as ever, was not prepared to express a preference as to his striking partner but he said of a link-up with Owen: "I don't think we would let anybody down. He's an interesting player who's got pace, takes everything in his stride and certainly

did not look out of place for England. He is ahead of me at that age, more prolific a scorer and a hell of a prospect. You'd never think he was 18."

Shearer, who would not talk about the Newcastle situation, except to dismiss speculation that they might be relegated, added: "Some partnerships click, some have to be worked at. Me and Les Ferdinand had to do a lot of work but we ended up scoring 50 goals between us."

The Swiss failed to qualify for the World Cup and, having been unable to attract either Tottenham's Christian Gross or Dortmund's Ottmar Hitzfeld, have appointed Gilbert Gross, of Neuchatel Xamax, as their new coach.

This is his first match in charge and he is expected to rely on a nucleus of experience, notably the talented playmaker Ciriaco Sforza who has inspired Kaiserslautern to the top of the Bundesliga, and Stéphane Chapuisat, whose goal put Dortmund into the European Cup semi-finals last week.

Two Premiership defenders, Stéphane Heucloz and Ramon Vega, are expected to feature while Patrick Muller, an attacking midfielder and a transfer target for Milan, is being lined up for a debut. Marco Grassi, who hit the bar during the 1-1 draw with England in Euro '96, will lead the attack if the prolific Kubilay Turkyilmaz fails a late fitness test.

Having lost their last match at home to Chile England would like to avoid defeat but Hoddle accurately regards the performance as more important than the result. "The Chile match may prove to be a blessing in disguise as it has dampened down some of the euphoria. I want to be positive but realistic. Some people had begun to think we only had to pull our shirts on to lift the World Cup. It is the performance which is most important but if we perform we will win. If we don't, Switzerland are strong enough to spring a surprise."

SWITZERLAND (probable): Commandeur (Neuchatel Xamax); Vega (Tottenham Hotspur); Yedin (VfB Stuttgart); Heucloz (Blackburn Rovers); Voller (Olympique Lyonnais); Muller (Milan); Schatz (Neuchatel Xamax); Müller (Genfette Genève); Sera (Servette Geneva); Turkyilmaz (Grasshopper Zurich) or Gross (AS Cannes); Chaperon (Lyon); Ganz (Lyon).

ENGLAND (probable): Flinders (Blackburn Rovers); Keown (Arsenal); Ferdinand (West Ham United); Southgate (Aston Villa); Lee (Newcastle United); Ince (Liverpool); Batty (Newcastle United); Hoddle (Sunderland); Walker (Middlesbrough) or McAllister (Liverpool); Owen (Liverpool); Shearer (Newcastle United).

Lose yourself
for the day.
Then return to
your beloved
children.
Thingy and
Wotsername.

Sharan 

مكتاب العمل

Merson sells Boro to Gascoigne

Football

By Alan Nixon

PAUL GASCOIGNE returned to English football yesterday in a £5m three-and-a-half year deal with Middlesbrough that owed much to the persuasive powers of Paul Merson.

The transfer has yet to pass the hurdle of a medical, which could prove tricky as Gascoigne has a call strain, a troublesome hamstring and a possible hernia.

Gascoigne, who will miss out on Rangers' attempt to win

a 10th successive Scottish Premier title, had previously stalled on the transfer, feeling he was being pushed out by chairman David Murray.

Gascoigne joined Rangers from Lazio in June 1995, but this season has seen him start only 16 games and his dwindling influence, through injury and suspension, may have persuaded Murray to let him go with two years still remaining on his contract.

Merson has settled well in

Gascoigne's native North-east and has provided Boro with much needed quality as they push for promotion to the Premiership. He will be ideal company for Gascoigne as he struggles to make England's World Cup squad. His battle with drink, drugs and gambling has won Merson the respect of his fellow professionals and Gascoigne, who has had his share of personal problems, will empathise with him.

Merson's intervention helped

Bryan Robson beat off competition from Premiership stragglers Crystal Palace. "I'm delighted Gascoigne is joining us," Robson, the Boro manager, said. "He's a great player and our fans will be really excited about watching him play."

"Paul should give us that little extra in midfield, which should help us achieve the ambitions we are setting ourselves."

Gascoigne will join Boro in training today and have his medical "in the next few days".

Whether he plays against Chelsea remains to be seen. "I've got to assess Gascoigne's fitness and see what he's done with Rangers," Robson said.

Gascoigne's advisor, Mel Stein, revealed that leaving Rangers was one of the toughest decisions his client has had to make in his career.

"It is very sad to be

leaving Rangers. It's an enormous wrench," Stein said. "Paul said to me 'I've left clubs before, but I've never been so sad about

leaving a club.' I don't think there will be a problem with his medical. He's probably a bit rusty, probably not quite match fit, although he is available for the Coca-Cola Cup final."

"His England ambitions remain as strong as ever. I'm not saying he wouldn't have been picked for the World Cup if he had stayed at Rangers, but clearly there is going to be a bell of a lot of competitive football in the weeks ahead for him."

More good news for Boro



Gascoigne: £5m transfer

yesterday came from their Italian defender Gianluca Festa. Described by Robson as "a model professional", Festa has signed a new five-year contract in the weeks ahead for him."

More football, pages 30 and 31

Hussain a shining light for England

Cricket

By Derek Pringle
in St John's, AntiguaEngland 127 & 275-3
West Indies 500-7 dec
Teo

A FIGHTING hundred from Nasser Hussain and a gritty half-century by Graham Thorpe went a long way towards helping England save this final Test match after heavy showers had washed out the morning session of play yesterday.

It was Hussain's sixth Test century and his first against the West Indies. After three frustrating tours here - he broke his hand in the one here nine years ago, and did not get picked for the Test matches last time - the moment was clearly an emotional one, and there were feelings of anger as well as joy when he threaded Carl Hooper backward of cover for the important run.

Although it was a rearguard action, the partnership had echoes of the one between these two at Edgbaston last year. On that occasion, Hussain scored a double hundred and Thorpe a single as Australia were put to the sword. Yesterday was more subdued, but no less worthy of merit, despite it being an exercise in damage limitation rather than a harbinger of victory.

Once the rain had been mopped up in the quaint labour

intensive style peculiar to this ground, a prompt start was made after lunch. With the new ball due one over after the start, Lara, somewhat surprisingly, kept faith with his two spinners.

A curious tactic, given that both Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose had spent the morning with their feet up, it was not entirely out of character. In fact, throughout this whole series Lara has rarely opted for the obvious when more obtuse options are available.

He did not persist with his folly for long, however, and four overs later the gangling figure of Ambrose was back running in to bowl with a shiny red new ball in his hand.

Following a loosener, which Hussain cut gleefully for four, Ambrose partnered at the other end by Franklyn Rose, soon warmed to his task to have both batsmen playing and missing. This was the first wave Hussain and Thorpe had to withstand if England were to have a chance of saving the game, a cause helped earlier by the rain, which washed out the morning's play.

They almost did not survive it, an outside edge from Thorpe narrowly failing to carry to Lara at first slip. But it was not all grim survival and there were runs too, as Hussain cut Rose and Ambrose, the latter high over the slips, to the boundary.

Later, Ambrose had the pair ducking as well as he switched



England's Nasser Hussain hits out on his way to an impressive century in the final Test in St John's, Antigua, yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

St John's scoreboard

First day: West Indies won toss	
ENGLAND - First Innings: 127 (D Ramnarine 4-49)	
WEST INDIES - First Innings: 600 for 7 dec (C L Hooper 100no, C S Lambton 104, P A Weston 92, G L Lara 65)	
Second Innings: 127 (Hooper 59)	
Match Total: 728 (Hooper 135)	
Progress: Fourth day: lunch: 39-0 (Hooper 13, Stewart 23) 11 overs: 50-2 (72 min, 122 balls), 12-0 (100 balls), 13-0 (122 balls), 14-0 (100 balls), 15-0 (122 balls), 16-0 (100 balls), 17-0 (122 balls), 18-0 (100 balls), 19-0 (122 balls), 20-0 (100 balls), 21-0 (122 balls), 22-0 (100 balls), 23-0 (122 balls), 24-0 (100 balls), 25-0 (122 balls), 26-0 (100 balls), 27-0 (122 balls), 28-0 (100 balls), 29-0 (122 balls), 30-0 (100 balls), 31-0 (122 balls), 32-0 (100 balls), 33-0 (122 balls), 34-0 (100 balls), 35-0 (122 balls), 36-0 (100 balls), 37-0 (122 balls), 38-0 (100 balls), 39-0 (122 balls), 40-0 (100 balls), 41-0 (122 balls), 42-0 (100 balls), 43-0 (122 balls), 44-0 (100 balls), 45-0 (122 balls), 46-0 (100 balls), 47-0 (122 balls), 48-0 (100 balls), 49-0 (122 balls), 50-0 (100 balls), 51-0 (122 balls), 52-0 (100 balls), 53-0 (122 balls), 54-0 (100 balls), 55-0 (122 balls), 56-0 (100 balls), 57-0 (122 balls), 58-0 (100 balls), 59-0 (122 balls), 60-0 (100 balls), 61-0 (122 balls), 62-0 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